

July 1970

During this month, A Troop supported MR II and Co B, 5th SF. B Troop supported the 4th Div to the north of An Khe. C Troop continued to support the 173rd Abn. Operations were significantly restricted during the first half of the month by the monsoon weather.

On the 1st, A Troop's Scouts discovered a bunker complex near Ban Me Thuot. The Guns fired on the area and the Scouts returned to count one dead NVA.

On the 2nd, A Troop's Scouts observed armed people in new hooches wearing uniforms. Identified as NVA by the Scouts, the Guns fired and killed three. During a sweep through the area, the Scouts killed two more.

On the 4th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that CSM Leonard E. Cruse assumed the duties for Sqdn Command Sergeant Major replacing CSM Percy Armes Jr..

Also on the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for C Troop UH-1H #66-16723 flown by an unnamed crew at grid BS881020. PFC Doug Guillaume provides:

In the last few years I've talked with several people and pieced together the following story. Earlier in the day we had a Huey go down on a beach for mechanical reasons. Wendy Irving was a PVT in the Blues 1st Squad. He was on this ship. I think he twisted his ankle during this event. The C&C called to insert another squad and a half of Blues, so my squad was inserted. We spent some time on the ground. Three Hueys landed to get us. Those three plus the repaired Huey took off and started for home. It was raining and getting dark. I was on the left side of the Huey. I remember hearing hostile fire coming on the right side. I know the gunner was firing back and at least one of the grunts was also firing. Sounds that weren't normal started coming from the Huey. The pilot turned to us and gave us the thumbs down signal. I could hear him put out the MAY DAY call. My mind returned to visions of a car accident I'm been in years earlier. I was carrying an M-79 grenade launcher. My wallet was in my left pocket. In the crash, the M-79 tore through my wallet. One of the Blues, Johnnie Miney, was pinned under the Huey. Most of us were thrown out or were able to get out of the wreck. We had crashed into a rice paddy. I remember two of our Lift ships returned to rescue us. I had a broke back and was just lying in the rice paddy. Terry Kahl carried me back to one of the Hueys. I was taken to B-med at LZ English. We all stayed the night at B-med. We were covered with mud and JP4. They just cut our clothes off us. Jerry Redden, the door gunner on the Huey, was in the hospital in Japan with me. Earlier he had been in the Blues with me. I believe that all the grunts and the two EM crewmembers were evacuated to CONUS due to injuries received in that crash. The medical people in Japan told me that I wouldn't walk again. About a month later, I un-strapped myself from the bed, got up and walked to the bathroom. They put me in a therapy program and nine months later I was back on duty at Fort Carson where I was discharged. I had been drafted after high school in January 1970. I went to Fort Polk for basic & ATT and was sent to Vietnam as an 11B replacement. I remember when I got orders to a Cavalry unit; I said 'No, I'm an Infantryman.'

PFC Rodney Lindell provides: (Need to insert his story here)

Johnnie Miney provides: (Need to insert his story here).

CPT Barry Speare recalls. CPT Vern Overturf was the AC and Mike Morris was the PIC. Vern and I were roommates for awhile. I've always told people that they were shot down by the same guys who would shoot me down in the same area 11 days later. We were flying back to English in a trail formation behind the C&C ship. The third Huey reported taking fire and sustained hits in the engine cowling area. There was no call from CPT Overturf's ship. We formed pink teams to go looking for the missing Huey. CPT Ron Schooley (in a Scout ship) and Rich Carvill (in a gunship) found the

wreckage and initiated the rescue operation. I remember collecting the valuables for the other guys as the medical people took turns working on them. I remember calling C Troop's 1st Sergeant on the landline with the list of names. We called the place where they got shot down and crashed Sniper's Island.

CPT Vern Overturf recalls: I joined C Troop and was promoted to Captain at about the same time, Feb 1970. I was a Fort Rucker trained UH-1 IP, so I started flying in the Lift platoon. At that time CPT Pete Kacerguis was the platoon leader. He and I were the only RLOs in the platoon that I can remember. When he became the Operations Officer, I was the senior officer in the lift platoon so I became the platoon leader. I always used BLUE 5 as my call sign even after becoming the platoon leader. I remember we didn't have an Infantry Lieutenant for the Blues for several months. I was sort of their officer as well but I don't recall having to do much of anything for them in that capacity. They were a great bunch of guys who knew their job and did their job well. I remember they had an excellent staff of NCOs in charge that handled everything. After a few months they did assign an Infantry Lieutenant. He was still serving in that position when I left C Troop in Aug or Sep 1970. I'd guess he was there at least three months before I left. The only NCO I remember in C Troop was SGT Pilk. He was the Supply Sergeant when I reported into C Troop. When he saw my name he remarked, "Oh, Captain Overturf you've returned to Vietnam for another tour." He was confusing me with my older brother, Wayne Overturf, who served in C Troop and HHT in 1968 and 1969. I was flying in the AO the day SGT Pilk was killed. I was very sad when it happened. He was a very, very good soldier.

Now concerning the events of 4 July 70. As I recall, C Troop had finished work for the day and about 7:00 p.m. we were heading home to An Khe. We had staged as usual out of a FSB, I believe it was called Bong Son, near LZ English. On the way home we encountered bad weather and turned around and were heading back to LZ English. We were flying "feet wet" when one of our Hueys reported a caution light and landed on the beach. I don't recall the nature of the caution light. The entire Troop landed around the Huey and set up a perimeter. The crew chief of the downed Huey and my crew chief collected at the downed Huey and checked out whatever was the problem. Whatever they did, the caution light went out and all aircraft systems indicated that the aircraft was again flyable. However, for whatever reason, the AC of the down Huey told me he wasn't comfortable flying the aircraft. I do not recall his name, but I cannot remember too many names from those days. There were not a whole lot of options at this point. I talked to the crew chiefs and they assured me all was well, so I traded aircraft with the AC. By now it was dark and raining and C&C decided we needed to head to LZ English rather than trying to return to An Khe. I remember all aircraft systems indicated normal prior to leaving the beach. I remember that due to the weather we were in a low and slow trail formation following each other's taillights at about 100 feet AGL and 60 knots. I believe the Hueys were in front, then the LOHs and finally the Cobras. I believe I was about the chock five. I definitely remember working hard to keep the running lights of the aircraft ahead of me in sight. I can only assume the guys behind us were doing the same. The weather was really crappy! As we neared the village of Bong Son, a couple of miles east of LZ English, the crew chief on the right side reported taking fire. I remember asking him the standard question we had to answer whenever we received fire from a populated area, "Can you pin point the source of the fire?" He said no but I told him to open fire anyway. He may have gotten a few rounds off when the caution light panel lit up and I noticed we were losing power. I remember entering an autorotation and turning on the landing light. All I could see was trees. I started preparing for a landing in the trees 'zero airspeed and tail first.' As we broke into the trees, I saw that it was a tree line and not a stand of trees and that we were going through the line of trees and into a rice paddy. I remember hitting the ground extremely hard. I don't remember anything else as I was knocked out on impact with the ground. When I came too, I remember two things; an electric sound and the strong smell of JP4. My immediate thought was to shut off the electrical system or there would be a

fire. I fumbled around for the switches and none of them were where they were supposed to be. I finally found the fuel switch and battery switch, turned them off and all was quiet. My next thought was, that I need to get out of the helicopter! I found the harness release, opened it and immediately landed on my head. At that point I realized that we were upside down! I crawled out of the wreckage with two thoughts on my mind 'my guys and the VC.' We had crashed into a rice paddy with plenty of water in it. Time was a blur to me. I don't know how long we were on the ground. It could have been 30 minutes it could have been 3 hours. I'm fairly certain of the following details but don't know how long any of them took. I remember there were two guys trapped under the wreckage. I worked with them for a while but realized that by myself I couldn't get them out. At this point, I saw this very dazed GI walking out of the dark toward the wreck. I could tell at a glance that he was dazed and incoherent, so I told him to sit down on the dike that he would be safe there. He did it without question. Next I heard a man yelling not far away. When I got to him he told me his leg really hurt. It was under water. When I pulled it up out of the water, I saw that most of the lower part of his leg below his knee was only attached by a tendon. I helped him lean on the dike and kept the leg in the water as it was not bleeding and I thought the cold water would keep it from bleeding. Next I saw the rest of my guys in the rice paddy. One of the guys was barely able to hold his head above water and was about to drown. I remember finding something to prop his head up above water and prevent him from drowning. I then went man to man to see if there was anything that I could immediately do for any of them. There wasn't. As I was trying to help them several thoughts came to mind. First, there wasn't much I could do for these poor guys. Second, we were completely defenseless. Third, I hadn't noticed even one able-bodied man. Fourth, I had to find a way to get us the hell out of there. I was told later that when the Troop landed at English and counted noses, they knew we were gone and had started organizing search teams. I was carrying a survival radio and activated it. I broadcasted a MAYDAY call and suddenly heard, "This is King on guard, how may I be of assistance." His voice was as if the heavens had opened and it was like talking to God himself! I explained to him that we were down, had crashed in a rice paddy not too far from English, and had many seriously injured people. I don't know if King talked to anyone or not. However, not long after talking to King, I was talking to Tonto Control who I recognized as the air controller at LZ English. I explained our situation to Tonto and he was able to relay to C Troop on the ground at LZ English my situation as they could not hear my emergency radio. I don't know how long these events took. I can't be sure. Anyway, King and Tonto were absolutely Godsend! (King was the radio call sign for an USAF C-130 based rescue and recovery control center that was airborne over northern South Vietnam.)

CPT Vern Overturf continues: I believe the Troop organized pink team to search for us because pretty soon I could hear what sounded like a Huey or a Cobra. They were backtracking toward the beach. I could talk to them on the radio so I vectored them by sound. You're flying toward me; you're flying away from me. I also had a strobe light and was shooting pin flares. They were flying with their landing lights on. Soon they found us. They must have called the Hueys because not long after that they landed with the Blues. I remember seeing the ships land and people moving out to pick up the injured. At that point I collapsed. Up to that point I can only assume I'd been running on adrenaline for the entire time. Most everyone who flew Lift knows you get to spend a lot of time at the staging area with the Blues. I got to know many of the guys. I don't recall the names and I didn't take any pictures, but I knew them and many of them knew me. I remember these two white guys walking toward me with a black guy walking a short distance behind them. The black guy was from Detroit or Cleveland. They offered to carry me, but the black guy said; "No, I'll take care of Captain Overturf." This soldier and I had become fairly close with many hours of conversation on the tarmac at the staging area. He picked me up and took me to the Huey. Everyone went to English and the aid station treated us. Five of the guys were medivaced that night south to Nha Trang or Cam Ranh. The other five stayed at English. I remember my skin burned from the fuel, so I asked if I

could take a shower and they let me. I had some bad cuts on my face that needed stitches. This SP4 got ready to work on me and said, "Captain, I've never sewed up an officer's face before but all the doctors are busy with the others and I'm all there is." I told him to continue and thanked them for all they were doing for our guys. I stayed the night at English. The next morning I returned An Khe. Maintenance went out to the crash site a day or so after the 4th. I was later told that we had taken numerous hits through the belly of the aircraft that went into the engine. A couple of days after the 4th, I found out that six of the guys had been medivaced to the States. I was sent to the hospital in Qui Nhon on an outpatient basis where they X-rayed me for a possible skull fracture and had to go to the hospital several times but everything turned out negative. During one of my visits to the hospital in Qui Nhon several days after the 4th of July there were C Troop aircraft landing at the hospital. They were bringing in my roommate CPT Barry Speare and his crew who had just been shot down in a LOH. After about ten days, I took my check ride and started flying again. I have often thought of those courageous young men that shared the events of 4 July 70 with me. I never heard about any of them again. I have always hoped and prayed for them.

SP4 Randy Godfrey recalls: I wasn't on the aircraft with Doug on the 4th of July. I thought I was but the more I've talked to Doug Guillaume recently I figured out that I wasn't on that aircraft that crashed. I did go back in that night to help recover them.

On the 5th, while conducting a search and destroy operation to the west of Pleiku, D Troop sustained one KIA **SP4 Robert Louis King** and two WIAs from a command detonated mine. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 7 Jan 1970 and his MOS as 91B20.

Art Walsh, who served with D Troop from August 1969 until August 1970, wrote: It was not a land mine, it was a B40 rocket. Bob was a medic and should not have been on that mission, as he was scheduled to stand down that day. D Troop's 1st Platoon was short one grunt and King volunteered to go out with us as a grunt. On this mission we were going into an AO we lovingly called "Ambush Alley." It was about a mile or so outside the gate at Camp Enari. This was our third trip to this AO and, as you can guess by the nickname we gave the AO, we did not expect a pleasant experience. When the ambush started, the first thing we heard was a B40. That was the one that hit Bob King. As I remember his loss of blood was too great and he died quickly. The Trooper who carried King out is John Huncherick. I am sure he can shed better light on this than I can.

John Huncherick wrote: I am sure it was not a land mine. As I recall, King got out of the vehicle because we had movement to our right. He moved away into the grass and brush. When I and someone else carried him out to be evaced, he had one leg hanging on by a thread of tissue. I believe he died from blood loss and because he had gone into shock.

Sam Williams visited the D Troop website and wrote: I was in D Troop unit about July 1970 when I moved to the S-5 section in headquarters. This was just before King was killed. I really enjoyed the pictures on the website. I left RVN on 12/01/70. It is hard to believe that that was 30 years ago.

On the 8th, CPT Barry Speare was flying a C Troop LOH #67-16134 at grid BS917075 with **WO1 Michael John Dickus** as his observer and SFC Emery F. Lassiter as the back seater. Barry was giving Dickus his orientation as a Scout in an AO near LZ English. The LOH took intense ground fire, crashed and burned. Barry was badly wounded and would be evaced. Dickus was badly burned. He was evaced to Japan and died on the 18th as a result of these burns. SGT Lassiter had a back injury and cut arm, went back to duty and was later transferred to HHT and then A Troop. The Wall database gives Dickus' tour start dates as 30 Apr 1970 and his MOS as 100B.

CPT Barry Speare was also wounded and provides: [Some of the following story also appears on the "Wild Bunch" video recorded in the 1990s.] We were called out at 3:30 p.m. because a troop transport into English had drew fire. So we sent there from Two Bits to get this gun. I had 138 hours in 23 days. The next day I was due to fly to Red Beach for an in-country R&R and bring a rebuilt

LOH back. I get to Snipper's Island. North of ENGLISH separated by a canal and a bridge. One side was to the sea. CW2 Lenny Smith was my wing and 1LT Skip Pool was his Observer on his last day of orientation. I saw five women going across the island carrying a big baskets front and back with poles and moving fast. On the ground were two baskets with a stick laying on the trail. I was tired (brain dead). I hovered over then – covered with hospital green scrubs. I flew around twice to the left around this thicket 50 feet by 200 feet and came to a stop and came back the other way slowly. Bill said I think I see the sling of rifle and almost immediately the aircraft was filled with bullets. Only one or two Aks firing but every round was hitting. I remember a hot sleng hammer hitting me and pinning me to the back of the seat. The aircraft started spinning to the right. I chopped the throttle and we hit nose low on the left side. I pulled my harness and walked out the left front bubble. I could see blood on my right arm and knew it was worthless. I had been hit in the chicken plate with several rounds. One went into my left neck and left shoulder took two. As we hit the ground, I heard this explosion from behind. SGT Lassiter was shooting while they were shooting. He killed one and I think we landed on the other guy we were that close. When we crashed he was hanging upside down because of his monkey strape. He got unhooked and ran up about 25 feet to meet the other LOH. When I got out, I went around the front of the aircraft and got to Dickus. With my left hand I unhooked him and grabbed him with the shirt and there was a large second explosion. He was looking at me and screaming at me, but naturally I wasn't plugged in so I could hear. I believe he was wounded but I couldn't get him out. I turned and ran to the other LOH. Lassiter had a cut on one right hand and Pool was out of the LOH. I shoved them back toward my LOH and I just laid down on the rear of Smith's LOH and he took off to take me to B Med at ENGLISH. I'd be there about 45 minutes. They put an IV in and stopped the bleeding in my right arm because the main artery had been severed. They were working on me when Dickus was brought in. He was burned over 80% of his body. Lassiter came in and they took care of him. CPT Leo Asselin was flying C&C that day, he came in and later told Lou Hennies I have never seen someone with some many bullet holes in him that is still alive. I was put on a 498th DUSTOFF ship for the 67th Evac at Qui Nhon. While 67th this armor captian from the 173rd came to see me and said they had rolled the LOH and found this dead dink under it. Later this guy would tell me about the Army bootstrape program and I did that too. The next thing I remember was the med team rushed out to get me. They took me into this airconditoned room. I had no shirt on and they they put me on a cold metal table for an Xray and it was so cold I wanted to die. I kept asking them to put me to sleep. Putting in a check tube. I kept reaching back to the hole in my back I kept telling them they had to fix the hole in my back and they kept telling not to touch. When I woke up in intensive care I saw Mr Dickus on a bed across from me. He was trying to talk to me but I was in and out. We never had a conversation. I was there 14 days but Dickus was moved to Japan in 3 days. Camp Drake for a week. They took the sutures out and started therapy then I would be in Ledermann for 11 months. They did the nerve work. Later in college, I met this former CPT ?? 67th Evac I remember

Concerning WO1 Michael Dickus, Gary Spooner and Wes Pearson were his roommates. He had been with the Troop about two months, had been flying slicks and when we got short of people – he volunteered for Scouts. He had real potential and was on his last day of orientation. Normally the transition was 15 hours in the aircraft dual and solo, then four days flying in the left seat. CPT Ron Schooley was the platoon leader.

Also on the 8th, **CW2 John W. Mursch** from A Troop died in Japan from burns he received in a ground accident. The Wall database states that John started his tour in Vietnam on 9 May 1969 and his MOS was 100E. He was 24 years old. The exact date of the incident where he was injured is not known. Jim Carpenter provides some details:

John and I flew in the gun platoon. A Troop's AO were often north of Kontum during this period. It seemed that the artillery near Kontum city fired toward the west most of the time. It was natural to

fly up the road from Pleiku past Kontum toward the Dak To area. We checked for the artillery and adjusted our route accordingly. But several pilots got in the habit of flying low level through the Kontum area to be beneath the artillery rather than spend the extra 15 minutes or so to determine where the artillery was coming from and going to; then flying way out east to avoid the path. Apparently someone somewhere complained about these low level flights, so the CO issued instructions for this to cease. About the beginning of the month John and I happened to be returning on this route and flew low level anyway. The CO's Huey landed a few minutes after we shut down and he came over to have words with John about going low level through Kontum. He grounded John for a couple weeks and assigned him to several ground details. One was burning off the vegetation on the wide side of our perimeter between the road and the bunkers. The normal practice was to spray JP4 from a hose over a good-sized area, then torch it. When the flames died now, they'd move to the next area and repeat the process. The wind shifted, blowing some sparks for the burning area into the area John was spraying. He couldn't escape the sudden flare up and was badly burned. One could suspect that his clothes were wet with fuel. I heard that his lungs were severely damaged by inhaling the flames. He was evaced to Japan and died there. To this day I am still very sad when I think about this incident. Certainly the CO had the authority to ground John and any soldier could have been working on the burning detail that day. Maybe John could have been more careful, but what a waste of a good guy!

WO Rick Brooks, who would later be Knight 28, provides: CW2 John William Mursch was a member of A Troop, 7/17 Air Cavalry in June, 1970 when I met him. John was on his second tour and had, in fact, just returned from a 30-day leave. He had extended his tour six months. I arrived in country around the 9th of June. After in-processing and a short school in An Khe I was to go on my first mission. I was the "sand bag" – front seater in the Cobra. John was the AC, the back seater of our AH-1G. Our mission required us to stage out of Dak To II. On the ride up there John, against policy, took me for a low level run up the highway. The Troop Commander, Major Rackley, saw the low level flight. He grounded John (for 30 days, I believe) upon completion of the day's mission. During the time John was grounded he was put in charge of several different details. One of these was to supervise the burning of vegetation around the perimeter of Camp Holloway, specifically that area known as the "Christmas Tree." On a day in late June or early July John was performing this duty. I know that he had several soldiers working with him and a 49 Charlie full of JP4. The drill was to hose an area down with the JP4; move the stuff off and then burn it. Apparently it didn't work that way, however. There was a fire and the 49 Charlie exploded. I'm pretty sure the driver was killed. John received burns over most of his body. He was evacuated to the hospital in Pleiku. I believe John died at the hospital in Pleiku before he could be stabilized and evacuated to the States or Japan. I believe the last "Checkmate" soldier to see John at the hospital was CW2 Larry Cranford. CPT Gary Downs was the gun platoon leader at the time of this incident. Ray Connolly and CPT Dennis Clausen were the section leaders, I believe. I stayed in A Troop until I DEROSed in June 1971.

SGT Tony Morton recalls that one of the Blues, SP4 Lynn Bell from Washington DC, was either on the detail or working on the bunker line when Mursch was killed. Bell received the Soldier's Medal for trying to put the fire out.

On the 9th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that MAJ Walter W. Wolfe assumed the duties of Sqdn XO replacing MAJ Ronald G. Maxson.

On the 15th, southwest of Pleiku, A Troop found a very large supply of food, equipment, and clothing in some structures by a bunker system. The Blues were inserted to gather equipment and documents for destruction and extraction.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with fatalities record for B Troop OH-6A #69-16009 flown by **WO1 Edgar Franklin Crouse, Jr.** and **WO1 Mark James**

Webb. Both men died. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Crouse, 31 May 1970, 100B; Webb, 4 Jan 1970, 100B.

CW2 Sam Patriacca recalls: On 20 July 1970, I had the day off because of my promotion to Captain. The Major's driver found me at the PX about 1 p.m. He told me that B Troop had just lost four LOHs with all their crews in the AO. One LOH had been shot down, then another went down and finally two more were involved in a mid-air while circling. There was only one LOH pilot left in the unit at that time. I immediately went to Operations to listen to the radios and I was still there when the Cobras returned about 4:30 or 5 p.m. All the pilots were called to a meeting that night. The CO was looking for volunteers from the Guns and the Lift Platoon to fly Scouts. Because I had been trained as an OH-6A gunner IP, I volunteered and became Scalphunter 22. I remember that B Troop flew missions with just Cobras for a few days. I also remember two new LOH pilots joined us. Two aircraft arrived from someplace along with four new pilots from in-country units. Steve Moody came in at this time. I remember training Steve to fly lead when he was shot down with SGT Reginald Humphries. I seem to recall we had 5 or 6 1LTs some of them were Corps of Engineers. I trained them to fly lead in the AO by flying their wing. I had them take over from the lead on the radios as time went on. The goal was to have one experienced guy with each team. After a few days, I'd put some of the new guys on my team and we'd have the experienced guys do more training. Near the end of September or early October, I went on R&R. When I returned from R&R, I went back to flying Cobras. I'd still fly OH-6As as a maintenance test pilot. I remember going to Hensel Field at old Camp Enari a few times. I remember training VNAF pilots in OH-6As. We did autorotations on the PSP that was still there.

Lynn C. Francis, WO1 Crouse's sister, wrote the following in July 2003: My memories of the death of my brother are like snapshots, but those snapshots are so vivid that it seems like it happened just yesterday. I had just celebrated my 10th birthday on July 18 and was spending a few days at my cousin's house. It was during this time that my mom and dad found out about Frankie's death. When my Aunt brought me home, she was the one who told me that he had died in a helicopter crash. I guess it was too hard for mom or dad to tell me. That evening was visitation at the funeral home. I remember seeing him in the casket and he was enclosed in glass. My mom never left the casket and kept commenting on how he had grown a mustache to everyone who came. I have no memory of the funeral service but have vivid memories of the graveside - It was a sunny July day. Dad sitting next to mom trying to comfort her then my brother, sister and me completed the row of chairs in front of the casket. I remember a lot of people were there and an abundance of flowers. The most painful and heart wrenching memory I have is seeing the flag draped coffin and listening to the 21 gun salute then Taps played while servicemen folded the flag. I get very emotional at this memory because when they handed the flag to my mom, she held it so close to her heart and just broke down. Things were different around the house after Frankie died. I know my mom has had a hard time with his death. It wasn't talked about and dad stopped racing cars, in which he had been NASCAR Modified champion two years in a row prior to Frankie's death. Dad said he needed to be at home more. I have special memories of my oldest brother that I cherish even now 39 years after his death. He always had time for me and would bring me little gifts (that I still have today). He was very thoughtful, kind and adventurous. I guess that's what led him to enlist in the Army - without my parents' knowledge.

THE WALL
PANEL AFTER PANEL + LINE AFTER LINE
NAME AFTER NAME + OF LIVES UNFINISHED
PANEL NUMBER 8W + LINE NUMBER 34

I FIND YOUR NAME + A LIFE UNFINISHED
+ EDGAR F. CROUSE JR +
RUBBING YOUR NAME + MISSING YOUR PRESENCE
KNOWING IN HEAVEN + YOUR LIFE GOES ON UNFINISHED

Lynn C. Francis also provided copies of various documents from WO1 Crouse's file. The file shows that he was awarded posthumously the DFC (1st Avn Bde GO 9584 dated 28 Sep 1970), AM, BS, and PH. The file contains a 12 Aug condolence letter signed by MAJ Leighton Haselgrove that reads in part: "During the early afternoon of 20 July, Edgar was serving as the observer in a light observation helicopter. His team, consisting of two light observation helicopters and two attack helicopters, was conducting a visual reconnaissance of an area twenty-five miles southwest of An Khe. At approximately 1:15 p.m. Edgar's team had located an enemy command post and his aircraft was subjected to intense automatic weapons fire from a well concealed enemy force. The hostile fire struck the aircraft causing it to crash in dense jungle. Rescue efforts were started immediately and his body was recovered in a short period of time. It is felt that Edgar was hit during the initial volley of enemy fire and died in the subsequent crash of the helicopter, so he suffered little if any pain. Edgar joined B Troop on June 11th and volunteered to fly light observation helicopters. At the time of his death, he was undergoing a portion of his training by flying as observer with a seasoned veteran of many combat missions. ... A memorial service was conducted at Camp Holloway by Chaplain (Major) Tracy A. Maness, the Squadron Chaplain, on 22 July." [Editor's Note: Anyone wishing to review a 'complete file' of six condolence letters from the unit commander all the way to the President of the United States, a DD Form 1300 (Report of Casualty), the telegram to the family, the four posthumous awards, plus the flight records of a young pilot who earned his wings on 17 April 1970 with 209 student pilot hours, didn't fly in May, started flying an OH-6A in Vietnam on 25 June and would log 18.1 hours of CP and 2.3 hours of 1P time in June, then logged 36.4 hours of CP time in an OH-6A from 12 to 20 July – Lynn Francis has the file.]

The following article titled "Raiders kill 13, uncover complex" appeared in the 20 Jun 1970 issue the Army Reporter provided James Irvine:

Camp Holloway – Light observed helicopters and Cobra gunships of C Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cav., 17th Combat Avn. Gp., encountered an estimated company-size element of NVA soldiers and Viet Cong six miles northeast of Landing Zone Crystal in II Corps' Binh Dinh Province. The Ruthless Riders, flying in support of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and a Regional Force unit, killed 13 NVA and uncovered a complex of more than 100 bunkers, many with overhead covers. The lead LOH, piloted by CPT Ron Schooley, was skimming over the ridgeline in the midafternoon, when a call was received from another helicopter which had taken enemy fire and returned it, resulting in one suspected NVA casualty. 'We immediately flew to the area and landed,' Schooley said. 'My observer, SP5 James Yamnitz, hopped out of the aircraft to apprehend the wounded enemy soldier. The NVA tried to escape and Yamnitz shot him with a .45-caliber pistol. He recovered the enemy's rifle.' Schooley then took off for a visual reconnaissance of the area. 'After a short time we discovered a large cave complex indicating recent activity,' Schooley said. 'As we were departing the area another NVA emerged from a cave and started firing. Yamnitz and my other observer, SP4 Vito Flitt, fired at them with the M60s killing them.' The lead Cobra gunship, flown by WO Phil Purcell and WO Mike Redd, and the wingship, flown by LT Irwin Whitehead and WO George Vevins, rolled in over the area with rockets and miniguns, resulting in six enemy killed. Schooley and his wingship came back for a bomb damage assessment and spotted two NVA trying to duck back into a cave. Schooley's observers then killed them with their machine guns. 'We then saw a mixed Viet Cong-NVA force coming out of the cave,' Yamnitz said. 'So we marked the target with a white phosphorous grenade and pulled out to allow the Cobras to deploy again.' After the

gunships had finished their strike, Schooley flew over the complex and spotted two wounded NVA trying to crawl back into the cave. Yamnitz and Flitt dispatched them with their M60s.

568th TC Detachment and 288th Signal Detachment integrated into A Troop

569th TC Detachment and 414th Signal Detachment integrated into B Troop

412th TC Detachment and 238th Signal Detachment integrated into C Troop

On the 21st, according to the Squadron Commander, LTC Rudy DeFrance, a new TO&E went into effect that officially had a LT as the infantry rifle platoon leader in each ARP. It also integrated the former direct support maintenance and avionics detachments into each ACT. Thus the 568th TC Detachment was deactivated and the resources integrated with A Troop's Maintenance Platoon. The same happened to the 569th TC Detachment at B Troop and the 412th TC Detachment at C Troop. The 288th Signal Detachment was deactivated and its resources integrated with A Troop. The 414th Signal Detachment was deactivated and its resources integrated with B Troop. The 238th Signal Detachment was deactivated and its resources integrated with C Troop.

On the 21st, while working northeast of Pleiku, A Troop made contact with elements of an NVA sapper battalion. For three days, A Troop employed their Guns, artillery, and airstrikes on this unit. The battle started when both LOHs in a Scout team were shot down and burned. The official histories are somewhat at odds on this point. The Squadron OR-LL said a Huey went down while the unit history says two LOHs. The VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage and loss records for to A Troop OH-6As #67-16311 and #66-07860 at grid AR887606. **1LT Lanny John Wallace, CW2 Marvin Leroy Wagner, WO1 Phillip Gerald Wright, and SP4 Walter Joseph Kacsock** died that day. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Kacsock, 29 Nov 1969, 11B40; Wagner, 4 Oct 1969, 100B; Wallace, 25 May 1970, 1204; Wright, 23 Jun 1970, 100B.

CPT Gary Downs remembers: That day we were staging out of Holloway because our AO was the Ia Krom and southern Dak Bla valleys. I remember one LOH had been shot up pretty good, so we sent them back to camp and called for the other team. This area was hot because the NVA had been moving units around Kontum, through these valleys and on toward the Mang Yang Pass. I also remember being like a traffic cop during those days; constantly coordinating airstrikes, gunships, arty, etc., etc. There were lots of targets. We even used the 361st Guns and that was sort of rare. Anyway, one of the Guns or maybe it was Opns back at Holloway mentioned that the first team hadn't checked in yet. We got to looking around and saw a column of smoke between us and Holloway. We hurried over there and found the two burnings hulls of the LOHs. It was really sad. The only thing we could figure is that one had flown up to get a close look at the other and they had had a mid-air. We put the Blues in quickly and secured their bodies.

CPT Ralph Foster recalls: I definitely remember the day my Supply Warrant, Marvin Wagner, who also flew with the Scouts crashed. He always wanted to go out with the Scouts whenever he could. That day, he was teamed with a 1LT (in another LOH). Can't recall his name, but we called him 'Car-54.' In his previous life he had been a cop. They had a midair and all aboard were killed. We think one of them took a hit from the ground and the second LOH was trying to see how bad the damage was and got too close.

SGT Anthony Morton shared: "When I first got to A Troop SP4 Walter Kacsock befriended me and showed me around. He was a clerk then and later volunteered to fly. I was always thankful for his friendship."

WO Hubert M. "Mike" Cochran joined the squadron during late July. He recalls: I arrived in country at Long Binh some time around 18-20 July 1970. I proceeded from Long Binh to the 17th Combat Aviation Group Headquarters at Nha Trang and on to the 7/17 Squadron Headquarters at Pleiku. C/7/17 at An Khe was my final destination. The day or so that I spent at Pleiku and my first

day in C Troop let me know that, yes, this was a shooting war. One of the troops, A or B, I can't recall which, at Pleiku had one or two OH-6s shot down the day I arrived at Pleiku. Air strikes could be seen from the Squadron area hitting the location where the LOH(s) took fire. We passed through the Mang Yang Pass on the way from Pleiku to An Khe and I learned the interesting story connected with this pass about a French unit that was ambushed there. The day I arrived at An Khe, C Troop had an OH-6 shot up and the pilot was medically evacuated. Late that afternoon the troop had a cookout. A deer that had been shot in the AO and slung back by Huey provided enough meat to feed everyone. It was easy to see that my tour was going to be filled with a lot of crazy, unexpected and exciting incidents that would be the norm rather than the exception. I was originally assigned to the Blue platoon as a slick driver. Most of my tour was spent in slicks though I did fly several weeks in the front seat of a Cobra. I was "promised" an in-country AH-1G transition at Vung Tau but a RLO bumped me from the quota. A few days after being assigned to C Troop a number of us in the troop were flown by CH-47 to Pleiku to attend a ceremony honoring Langhorn, the Medal of Honor winner, who was killed in 1969. This was quite a ceremony to pay honor to this young man who gave his life for others. The heat, tactics, Dink shops, Mama-sans with their baskets of goodies for sale, the kids, the O Club, standby at Two Bits, first in-coming, green Mo#&%& Fu%&\$\$s and Red Co#\$ Suckers were just a few of the things involved in a FNG's indoctrination. The Golf Course at An Khe had been, at one time, the largest heliport in the world. It sat at the base of Hong Kong Mountain which was a very prominent hill just to the west. I landed on its top one day with "Snappy" "Moby Dick" White, the unit's maintenance officer. [The author believes CWO White's real name is Richard C. White. We shut the Huey down and checked the area out. There was a monument on top that had the names of several signal guys who had been killed during an attack. The remains of a Caribou were also on the side of the hill. I gather that was the results of inclement weather flying. A metal hangar near the tower served as the maintenance area. The helicopter parking areas were in this vicinity, and the troop area was three to four hundred yards to the north. This area was fairly decent. The officers' area consisted of BOQ rooms on the north and south sides of a small courtyard. The showers were on the west side and a day room/bar was on the east side. We had a .51 cal. on display in the courtyard that someone would occasionally fire a .50 cal. round in just to see if it still worked. Charlie Troop was in support of the 173rd Airborne when I arrived in country. We staged out of FSB Two Bits which was a few clicks west of LZ English. Our mission was to pull visual recons in the 173's AO. A team of Cobras, OH-6s and the Blues, flown in three or four Hueys, would be on standby at Two Bits. The Blues remained on standby until they were inserted to check out something on the ground or to retrieve an OH-6 crew which had gone down. There were two additional firebases in the AO. Salem was located on the east side of the highway between Uplift and English. We worked the Crow's Foot and other areas around English, Uplift and to the west and northwest of Phu Cat AFB. I had heard tales about the Soui Cau Valley right after my arrival in C Troop. I'll expand on this later.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16525 flown by an unnamed crew who had two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, they made a forced landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16383 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 24th, B Troop discovered a large enemy force northwest of An Khe and used their Scouts, Guns, artillery and air strikes to kill 39. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle

damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by an unnamed crew who had two injuries at grid BR284656. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took multiple hits from B-40 rocket type exploding weapon in the right engine compartment, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Also on the 24th, SGT Reginald A Humphries of B Troop received a Silver Star for actions on this day. Please report details to Mike Law. CW2 Dennis Bartash provides:

I joined B Troop in early 1970 at the start of my second tour in Vietnam. After earning my wings in class 67-21, I went to AMOC and then test pilot school. I served with B/15th Transportation Battalion of the 1st Cav division in 1968 and 1969. After that tour I taught for a while at Fort Eustis and then went to Cobra school en route to Vietnam. While I've wiped my memory clean of details about the bad days in the AO, I have several fond memories of the good times. I remember MAJ Bowling was the CO when I joined B Troop. Then MAJ Haselgrove became the CO. I joined the gun platoon and spent much of my time with Pat Bilyk and CW2 Ron Tusi. The three of us had adjoining rooms in our barracks at Holloway. We decided to move our beds into one room and knock down the adjoining walls to establish 'The Library' – an after-hours bar. Pat and I were a little concerned that some of the senior officers in the Troop or Squadron would make us close 'The Library' so we invited several to our 'Open House' after it was ready. Ron Tusi told us not to sweat it and that turned out to be good advise. I think even the Squadron Commander came to the 'Open House.' We never heard another word about closing it. Pat Bilyk was a gun-crazy guy. He always had several weapons on him. I think he even slept with an M-16! I enjoyed his company. We flew together often. I remember once Pat and I were a little aggressive in the AO. I believe MAJ Haselgrove was the C&C during that action. He chewed us out for flying too hard against the NVA then wrote us up for a Bronze Star for valor. My impression that B Troop was a pretty Gung Ho bunch – we flew hard and fought hard. I have lots of memories of Steve Moody, a LOH pilot. It seems that everyone I know has 'Steve Moody getting shot down in a LOH' stories. He used to fly SGT Humphries a lot. Everyone had a lot of respect for SGT Humphries. I remember once they were shot down and Steve got knocked out. SGT Humphries was shooting it out with the NVA while carrying Steve to where they could be rescued. Steve received a Silver Star for that action and SGT Humphries a Bronze Star. Steve was really mad about that! I remember him saying, 'Hell, I didn't do anything. SGT Humphries saved my life by carrying me out of there – all the time shooting at the bad guys – and I get a SS. This is wrong – he was the hero – not me!' I remember receiving a compliment one day from Ron Stokes, a pilot in the Lift platoon. He told me I provided 'good cover' for him and he appreciated it.

On the 30th, A Troop made contact with an enemy unit north of the Plei Me SF Camp and during a six hour massive firepower demonstration killed 44 NVA. It started when the Scouts discovered a large enemy concentration. After an airstrike, the Lift inserted an ARVN company through a maze of small arms fire. When the Lift returned with their Blues, they found the ARVN still huddled in the LZ. The Blues got the ground force moving and killed six NVA on the way to a downed aircraft. The Guns then spotted 10 NVA moving out area. They killed six. Then while the Scouts screened, the Blues moved over to the site and captured four more with their weapons. Many of the Blues were awarded the Army Commendation Medal with 'V' for heroism via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 8612 dated 2 September 1970. The citation reads in part – these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while serving with an aero-rifle platoon on a rescue mission seven miles southeast of Plei Me. When two LOHs were shot down by intense enemy automatic weapons fire, they were inserted in the bullet swept area to aid the rescue of the downed aviators. As they thoroughly search the enemy infested area for the downed aviators, they suddenly encountered an enemy bunker complex. With complete composure and professionalism, they skillfully maneuvered into a strategic position from which they effectively eliminated the enemy positions with a devastating barrage of fire. Slowly

and cautiously proceeding, they succeeded in locating and rescuing the stranded aviators. The following were listed for this award: SSG Thomas Wells 2nd OLC, SGT Anthony Morton 2nd OLC, SGT William Devries 2nd OLC, SP4 Jerry Davis 1st OLC, SP4 Stuart 'Young Blood' Furman 2nd OLC, SP4 Richard Greggersen 2nd OLC, SP4 Ronald Jacobs 2nd OLC, SP4 George Knetsar 5th OLC, SP4 Joseph Mellon 2nd OLC, SP4 Jimmy Simmons 3rd OLC, PFC Lynn A. Bell 1st OLC, PFC Harold McCoy 1st OLC, PFC Calvin McGee 1st OLC, and PFC Wilnes 'Professor' Plactacis 2nd OLC.

SSG Tom Wells wrote the following that he calls 'A Bad Day for Vietnamization:' On the 30th of July 1970, the Blues were inserted on a bad situation. We had two scout choppers shot down with four crew members about to be overrun and captured. This was a bad month for the scouts. We lost two choppers on the 21st of July and all four crew members were killed. We did not need any more casualties or captives taken. The Blues were on stand down for four days. We were relieved by a company of ARVNs stationed in Pleiku and had taken over our duties for the last four days. We helped train them starting on the 15th of July. We would go over to their unit and after all the handshaking was over we instructed at least 80 of them on tactics and the way we moved through the AO. We also instructed them on what lift ships certain personnel and what weapons should be on. With our interpreter, Kim, we spent five days of which one full day was on repelling from the choppers. They seemed to do well. Of course they were supposed to be seasoned troopers, but you never know until that first bullet cracks over your head what a soldier will do – fight, freeze or run away. In Vietnam there was no place to run to. When inserted, you have to think that you are already surrounded with no way out except to fight. I said that the Blues were on stand down. We had not been out in four days. Most of the Blues were on details or on bunker guard for the First Sergeant. When word came of the shooting down of the two LOHs, I believe it was the avionics Sergeant who gave out the alarm. I grabbed my CAR-15 and web gear and ran down to the Blues hooch yelling to hook up and get to the flight line. Because of the stand down, the First Sergeant felt that we should lock up all our weapons and ammo in the arms room. We had a good go around about it. He felt it was unsafe for the ammo and the weapons to be in their lockers. I said that the Blues never had a discharged weapon in the area, which was more than could be said of other personnel. We finally compromised, for now, on giving up our M-60's, our crew served weapons, and locked them up in his arms room which we had to leave behind. When we got to the flight line there were only 14 of us. We loaded on two lift ships and took off. I was told they had already inserted some of the little people, ARVNs, and we would be going in behind them in support. When we arrived at the LZ, it was still hot. The ARVNs were there, but none of them were moving. When we got to the ground bullets were flying all over us in the elephant grass. I found their Captain who was quite flamboyant. He had a cane, a red scarf and a big white Panama hat. I thought he was a southern overseer as he beat his men with the cane to get them moving, which did not do much good. Their unit was called ARVN Scouts. I think more likely Boy Scouts. They had little experience in combat as they hugged the ground. I had no time for this. I said that we were going in the direction of the shooting. We formed a V formation. I had six of the Blues on the right of me, and six of them on the left with my RTO SP4 Mellon behind me. As we moved through the elephant grass, we encountered NVA and we just kept moving and shooting them. We must have found the right flank of the NVA unit and were just rolling up their flank a few at a time. We went about 200 yards and killed about 20 NVA. We were not paying much attention to the where we were going. We just got caught up in the moment of rolling up their right flank and killing them, when SP4 Mellon put his hand on my shoulder and told me to get on the horn. We stopped. The call was coming from a LOH that was coming to us. It was smoking. He said that the down scouts were to our right and about to be captured. He said to follow him. We did a 90-degree turn in the elephant grass. I went to the back of the Blues and found the ARVN scout Captain. I explained to him to keep going in the direction we were heading and to keep rolling up the NVA flank. I spent more time showing him what was going on and that we could get the enemy between us if he kept going

in that direction. He understood me. I looked up at the little smoking LOH and thought of the bedtime story I would read to my daughter about a little engine that was going up a hill smoking and saying, "I can do it, I can do it." We moved out of the elephant grass into an open flat terrain with a few trees. As I watched the LOH, we started a kind of double time as the men went into a full echelon as we got near the shooting. I thought that if the smoking LOH doesn't get out of here I will be policing him up also. But he stayed with us. The NVA was so busy at shooting at the little LOH and the scouts they were trying to over run, that they never saw the Blues coming up on them. SGT Devries was on my left flank. He was from Kalamazoo, Michigan. He came to me in late March when the first division stood down. He was one of two sergeants that I got. The other one was shot in Dak Seang on the second lift ship which went down. His name was SGT Rosenberg. They were the last Blues replacements. As of January 1st 1970 if you got hit and you needed surgery, you left country to Japan and then home. That was more of the Vietnamization Program. I, myself, was wounded in January, and was able to get out of the orders and stay in country. In my 18 months as the platoon sergeant I only had three men wounded, SGT Rosenberg (who went home), PVT Stidem (who had only a flesh wound at Dak Seang) and myself. On my right was SGT Morton from Ohio. He came to me as a Private in January, one of the last infantry replacements from the states. He was kind of a protégé of mine. He was smart and adapted well to situations and I was able to promote him to SGT fast. He would go far in the Army if he stayed. I had no SSGs left. SGT Rock Soliz was the only one that I was able to promote to SSG. It was not easy promoting people to this rank because of the First Sergeant who was always down on the Blues. SSG Soliz had DEROS'd that month. I could sure have used him in this battle. As we opened up on the NVA, we took them by complete surprise. As we passed the downed LOHs I saw SFC Steinolfson, the scout platoon sergeant, in the bushes. I ran to him. He said that everyone was okay. He was real happy to see us. I then caught up with the boys. They were in a full echelon movement and were moving so fast they killed 20 more NVA and captured four more with their weapons. I was never so proud of them moving like they did. I then told them to get down on the ground in a half moon position. By now the ARVN scouts should be almost to our front. The men checked the downed choppers for ammo and weapons. I sure could use those M-60's now instead of them collecting dust in the First Sergeant's arms room. I expected that the NVA would turn back on us with a company of ARVNs behind them. They would rush the 14 of us, or surrender. I called again about how close the ARVN were to us. I did not want to open up on them. I got a call that they found our ARVN scouts back at the LZ where they landed. They stripped the 20 NVA bodies that the Blues killed earlier and went back to the LZ to divvy up what they found. I guess their work was done for the day. They were some great allies to depend on. The 44 NVA that were mentioned that day was the number I called in that the Blues killed or captured. I then realized that the Blues had killed or captured over three times as many as we had on the ground with us that day and took no casualties. What we found out later was that we were up against a reinforced battalion of NVA. Between the air strikes, our guns and scouts encountered with the enemy, I can only imagine how many more were dead out there, hundreds I am sure. We were not able to police the battlefield to find out how many really were killed. This was an ARVN operation and left to them to police the battlefield, if they ever did. So we just picked up the captured weapons and personnel and left. That was our first try on turning over the Blues to the ARVNs. That night there was a small mutiny, I understand, among the pilots about the situation that day. The Blues were back in business. We got our M-60s back and the First Sergeant DEROS'd after that. SFC Steinolfson took over as First Sergeant, Thank God. The Blues would stay as a unit until I left in November. They broke up again and then were recalled for a short time and then completely dissolved. I always felt that if we could get some rangers or airborne ARVNs we would be better off. I worked with the 45th Ranger Battalion down south in Con Tho in the Mekong Delta in 1966 in the U Minh Forest along the Cambodian border. They were really good troops. You could always rely on them to get you out even if their lives depended on it. With regular ARVNs you never knew what you would get. Army commendation medals with V device

were given to all 14 of us for this action. Mine was with a 4th Oak Leaf cluster, and my second with a V. That WAS a bad day for Vietnamization.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for four A Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews as follows: (1) #65-12940 was on a personnel rescue and recovery mission, during the level flight in the AO, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom middle fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. (2) #67-16217" had one crew member injury during a recon mission, while over the target area, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was recovered and repaired in theater. (3) #67-16311 was on a combat mission, when they took several hits from an unknown source, they crashed, the helicopter was recovered but lost to inventory. (4) #67-16315" had two crew member injuries on a recon mission, while over the target area, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was recovered but lost to theater.

CPT Doug Flenniken recalls: Let's see if I can shed any light on the events of the day. This was the day I got my silver stupid award. I wasn't scheduled to fly that day. As I remember I had sort of blown my 140 hours back around the 20th or so and failed to notice it; however, the good old Operations officer blew the whistle on me. Anyway I missed all the initial fun that day. When the radio traffic started coming with the mess that was going on and that we had a few Scouts parked in the bushes without permission, I borrowed a B troop LOH with a minigun (which B Troop didn't normally carry) to see what I could do to help. This of course was done with a somewhat abbreviated preflight but I must have untied the blades. When I arrived in the AO I instantly realized the maintenance guys were going to be even more upset with the Scouts than usual. We had smashed and burning airplanes everywhere. As the morning wore on, we dodged some bullets (some better than others), and inserted the Blues. I might point out that SSG Wells was highly critical of Tiny (his real is David) Sims and the rest of the Lift guys not being able to select an LZ more than 30 or 40 meters from a crowd of highly pissed dinks. The guns had shot up two or three basic loads of rockets. As I recall, Ray Connolly and the other gun drivers became somewhat upset with the local Vietnamese populace when they proceeded to attempt to perforate their normally high altitude Cobras. This, of course, resulted in a rather fast and vicious attempt by the gun drivers to deforest everything within 10 grid squares. The area where this all happened consisted of elephant grass and rather thick trees about 10 meters high. The ground was semi-flat with folds and gullies. This was not triple canopy jungle here. That's what probably got us into trouble. You know, there were too many large trees to hide behind when the bad guys started shooting. When Sims inserted the Blues and they had that rather violent squabble with the local dinks as to who should have freedom of movement in the local area. SSG Wells and the boys became a little disoriented as to where the parked helicopters were. So, like a dummy, I said follow my little smoking LOH and I'll lead you to the crew guy that is hiding over here in the bushes. I was a short ways in front of the Blues acting like a traffic sign when much to my surprise I made the great mental leap that the bad guys must be monitoring our radio frequency. There were a mess of them heading toward the observer in the bushes from the opposite direction. The guy's name on the ground was Steinolfson, an E6 at that time I think. Needless to say he was not happy sitting in the grass armed with a 38 in his hand, a smoking LOH nearby and a large swarm of people coming to see him, half of which had a decidedly different view on the outcome of the war than him. Much to my chagrin this was the moment that I discovered the reason that B Troop didn't normally hang miniguns on their LOHs - the damn things jammed after one or two rounds. We didn't normally have that problem in A Troop. I guess our armorers and observers took better care of our miniguns. Anyway, while my observer was trying to consume all of the M60 ammo on board out his side of the aircraft, I decided to play out an old John Wayne complex by whipped out my trusty 38 from between my legs and began blazing away at the bad guys. Needless to say but I quickly saw there were more bad guys than we had bullets, so I landed on top of Steinolfson. He jumped in the back and we got the hell out of the

way while SSG Wells and his guys continued discussing ownership of the terrain with the bad guys. We won that discussion. The others involved that day were: Daughton (Charlie) Bahr, the original magnet ass Scout, Steinhofson, his observer, Jimmy Jones Scout pilot, and Chuck Belanger Scout pilot. The gun pilots were Ray Connolly, Larry Cranford, and Gary Mills. The Lift pilots were Tiny Sims, Ed Klaeger, and John Arrington. I believe MAJ Jim Trussell was the commander in the C&C that day.

1LT David Sims, after reading the above accounts, stated 'for the record' that the Scouts had selected the LZ and the Cobras had vectored the Lift ship in just like always.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17723 flown by CPT W.R. Petrak at Pleiku. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads: While on a maintenance test flight, at 70 knots airspeed and 1000 feet AGL on a heading of 170 degrees, the engine failed. The aircraft was autorotated and landed hard.

Ronald L. Haler recalls: I was a member of the engine shop and flew with CPT Petrak and his regular maintenance crew on a test flight for a UH-1 that was having engine problems. The engine failed during the flight and he autorotated us all down to safety, and with just minor damage to the aircraft. I believe he saved my life and the lives of others that day. I have had the please of thanking him for that. I think after Vietnam he flew in the Ohio NG and retired as a WO4.

SP5 Chuck Strong provided: I remember I got malaria and spent some time in the hospital. When I return, they'd given someone else my M16 and I got an M79 grenade launcher as my weapon. I thought that was neat because it was fun to play with the M79. I have lots of photos posted on the "dark side" of the Ruthless net. One is of an A Troop medal ceremony. The photo is stamped July 1970. It shows a short black man named Ron Ferguson. It makes me laugh when I see it. The guy borrowed \$100 from me just about the time that picture was taken. He just disappeared right after that and still owes me that money! I can't say that I was smoking back then and would have tried to get in on it. I remember once I thumped a cigarette out the door of the Huey one night but my aim was off and it hit the door. Sparks flew up and the AC thought we had rounds coming in. The bad part is how did I miss that big opening of a door?!

CPT Vern Overturf recalls: Not long after CPT Lou Hennies became the Commander of C Troop, I was transferred to the Standardization Section at Squadron HQ at Holloway. Prior to coming to Vietnam I completed the IP course at Fort Rucker. I DEROSed in Feb 1971. (Details please about the Standardization Section)

SGT Charles M. Rawlings served with D Troop from July 1969 until he DEROSed in August 1970. He stayed in the Army and retired as a CSM. He passed away in October 2009 in Germany.

August 1970

For the first half of the month, B Troop supported the 4th Div southwest of An Khe but reported nothing of significance. During this month, D Troop provided convoy escort to the Oasis, Blackhawk, Kontum, and Enari plus provided a ready reaction force for the Squadron elements at Camp Holloway. Also for the first half of the month, C Troop supported the 173rd Abn south of LZ English and observed numerous caves, bunkers and structures. 1LT David Stinson wrote an unpublished manuscript titled *Unexpected Destiny*. He provides some background details about C Troop during this period:

I arrived in country July 10, 1970 and ended up at Charlie Troop in An Khe on July 17. CPT Lou Hennies (Clyde 6) was the CO at the time and CPT Leo Asselin was the XO. CPT Rich Carvill was the gun platoon leader. CPT Ron Schooley was, I think, the scout platoon leader. CPT Barry Speare had been wounded and medevac'd just over a week before I arrived. I believe that either CPT Vern Overturf or CPT Pete Kacerguis was the lift platoon leader. My first hooch mate 1LT John C.

Nelson was the grunt platoon leader. CPT Lynn Megee was the chief maintenance officer. Unfortunately, because I was an RLO and had an English degree, Clyde 6 shanghaied me to be the admin officer my first two months in country. I replaced CW2 Dave Bragg, who was going home. Because of my admin duties I got only limited flying time in the AO, some in slicks but mostly in snakes. I got an in-country Cobra transition in September and thereafter was officially in the gun platoon. By then, the old platoon leaders had DEROS'd. While we were in An Khe, 1SG C.C. Cowsen became Troop First Sergeant.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #68-17036 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack approach target area, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, the bottom engine compartment, and the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 8th, A Troop's Scouts found a large enemy force northeast of Pleiku. The Squadron OR-LL provides scant details of this engagement and records a familiar scenario: Scouts find, Guns shoot, airstrike, ARP insertion, count the dead, gather the equipment and documents for destruction and extraction, capture a few, etc. Score for the day: the aircraft killed 20, the Blues took six prisoners plus 3,000 lbs of NVA equipment including 122mm rockets and launchers without suffering any losses.

CPT Tom Galyean provides: I was the Lift platoon leader in A Troop. As I read a draft version of this history suddenly a flood of memories came back to me. A Troop saw considerable action during those days, some of it planned and orchestrated in true Cav style; some of it completely by accident. I believe I can provide some interesting details about the engagement on 8 August. It was near the end of the day. We were returning to Holloway from Kontum where we had staged that day. The whole Troop was en route when a Cobra developed a mechanical problem that required an immediate landing; something like a tail rotor chip detector light, I think. They selected a fairly good sized, open area. The Scouts gave it a quick look and declared it clear, so the Cobra landed. My Lift ships, with the Blues onboard, were only a minute or so behind the Guns, so we inserted around the Cobra to provide security until the maintenance folks could either fix it or hook it out. We had both pair of Scouts and three Guns in the air. Naturally, with both the Blues and a ship on the ground, no one was going home. The Scouts began looking around, widening their search area and soon reported some fresh digging. My memory is a little fuzzy on the next point. I think an NVA soldier jumped from cover and the Blues killed him; but maybe someone fired at a LOH. Anyway, in short order, a fairly large sized NVA unit was forced from cover. I remember the Scouts and the Guns worked the area well. The Guns were armed with flechettes; not good news for bad guys in the open. Our Blues had a "Kit Carson" scout who had been an NVA 1LT. This guy grabs a bullhorn and tells the NVA they are surrounded and should surrender. As soon as they give up, we start treating their wounded. We hauled several to hospitals in Pleiku that had wounds from the nails. There were lots of dead too. Our "Kit Carson" spent some time talking with one of their officers; a platoon leader, I think. He learned that this was, indeed, one unlucky NVA battalion. They had moved down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and were trying to move to their assigned area some where southeast of Pleiku without being noticed. While they were crossing into Vietnam, they happened to be near the center of an "Arc Light" that wiped out a considerable portion of the battalion. After recovering from that, they moved through the mountains east of Kontum. One of their bivouac sites was hit by a series of H&I artillery barrages that further reduced their ranks. This unit was composed mostly of young guys, new to the military. Having been hit twice pretty hard without even being involved in a battle had really stressed these guys. This may explain why the first guy jumped at the beginning of this engagement. Anyway, they had recovered from this second loss and were moving carefully when they accidentally came into contact with A Troop. The third time was "the charm!" It was our understanding that after the final casualties inflicted by our Cobras

and Scouts and those prisoners taken by the Blues, that this new NVA battalion ceased to exist before it ever engaged any of our friendly forces. All this because of their incredibly bad luck of being in the wrong place at the wrong time on three successive occasions!!

SSG Tom Wells, A Troop's Blue Platoon leader, wrote the following piece he calls 'The Last Battle.' On our way home from an uneventful day in Kontum back to Camp Holloway one of our Cobra gunships had a mechanical failure and was forced to sit down in a fairly open area about 20 miles northwest of Pleiku. After we landed we set up security around the chopper waiting for maintenance to come up from Holloway to extract the downed Cobra. It was a lightly wooded area, an old farm area with rice paddies that had been overgrown. Vietnamization was taking a toll on my Blues. We weren't receiving any new grunts in country. One night in June I had a knock on my door and was surprised to see MAJ Rackley, A troop commander. I thought at first that maybe one of the blues got into trouble like the time that SGT Tony Morton decided he wanted to go to Pleiku, which was off limits at the time. They had a two and a half ton truck that would take the officers over to the Officers Club at the Air Force base in Pleiku so he got on the Officer's truck with the rank of Captain on his collar and was seen by Major Rackley on the way back. I invited him in and offered him a beer. He refused saying that this was not a social call. "I have a question for you," he said. "How many men do you feel you would be comfortable with inserting in the AO?" I said that with the protection of the Scouts and the Guns that we could get down to seven and that I would still feel comfortable on a normal insertion. He said, "Oh, the Magnificent Seven!" I always thought that was just a joke that just stayed in the platoon about the point squad, but if we have to go in on a rescue mission I would go by myself if necessary. He gave me the biggest grin that I had ever seen, which was unusual for him since he rarely smiled and said, "I guess you answered my question, SGT Wells." We were down to about 16 Blues left with all the DEROS's with nothing coming in. I was able to muster 16 that day and I still had, Dick, my Kit Carson scout. After we secured the area SP4 Richard Greggersen (the kid), an outstanding point man from Minneapolis, and Dick walked down about 50 yards on this trail that looked well used looking for signs of the NVA. Dick came back up, but Richard was still down there, when all of a sudden he opened fire. We ran down the trail with the point squad and the second squad leaving six men behind to guard the choppers. When we got to Richard, he had shot and killed an NVA who had been hiding in the bushes and said that he saw five more scattering to the south. This got the ball rolling. A Scout LOH spotted movement in the area and started shooting up and called in the Guns to rake the area. We started running down the trail toward the sound of the guns to the south and right of us where the trail wound. All of a sudden, from the left side of the trail, across a small rice paddy we were fired upon from the berm. SGT Devries, with the second squad of four men, (including one SP4 Leonard "Ski" Polczinski, an over six-foot tall infantry man from Green Bay, who carried an M-60 machine gun) out flanked and overran the position killing five NVA. The point squad kept running down the trail and killed three more NVA. We came to an open area and saw over 20 bodies lying there with their weapons thinking they were all dead. When PFC McCoy, a good-old boy from Georgia, kicked one and realized they were still alive. We started snatching them up. They were afraid to move because of the Scouts buzzing around us and didn't know we were there. They didn't seem to have any fight left in them. I then left SGT Morton, my RTO and the rest of the point squad there. I continued down the trail with Richard and George "Lizard" Knetsar, a gung-ho soldier who told me he was born in Lizard Flats, Texas. Maybe this was a joke? I was never sure. He came up from down south from an infantry unit but was trained as an FO for the artillery. He wanted a Combat Infantry Badge so we pulled some strings and got him the CIB even though he had an artillery MOS. We continued down the trail about 50 more yards when they spotted two NVA bodies off the trail. They went to check them out. I continued down the trail by myself. As I moved down the jungle got thicker and felt cool. About 40 yards down I came to a sudden stop when I realized that off to the left of me there were three freshly dug bunkers. I could hear Dick, the Kit Carson scout, on the bullhorn

saying something in Vietnamese. All of a sudden the bunkers erupted with NVA. Back at Ft. Bragg I had been sent TDY to the 82nd ABN for 90 days to teach a “quick kill” course at the Raider School (which was like the more familiar recon schools). This course taught the soldiers to look at the target and shoot from the hip without aiming. I got rather good at it. I took a stance and opened fire at them. I emptied my first magazine and reloaded quickly because I had two magazines taped together. I emptied the second magazine and started to fumble for a third when I heard a voice behind me say, “I think they are all dead, Sarge.” I turned to see George and Richard behind me. I was still shaking a bit when I heard my RTO, Joe Mellon, from Guttenberg, Iowa, calling my name over the bullhorn to get back to his location. I told Richard and George to check them out because I knew they would do a good job since they had got into the bad habit of collecting ears. I started back up the path. About half way up I had the bejesus scared out of me when Dick came down the trail and had an NVA Officer in tow. Thank God he had that sh#&-eating grin on his face because my adrenaline was so high that I might have shot them. He was looking for the point. I continued up the trail. When I got to the open clearing, my RTO was frustrated with the C&C ship always wanting to know what was happening. I took the horn and said that I would get back to them with a count. SGT Devries was already there with the second squad, thank God, to help control the situation because of all the prisoners we had. Several of the prisoners were wounded from the gunships. The second squad took control of them and moved them back to our choppers. George and Richard joined us. They said that there were seven bodies at the lower bunkers. I got a call from the C&C ship who wanted a count and the amount. We had a total of 16 killed by the Blues and over 20 more were captured. There were at least another 40 killed by the Scouts and Guns in the woods. I realized, once again, that the Blues had killed and captured over three times as many as we had on the ground fighting with us that day, and took no casualties! We started using the prisoners to help us destroy all the equipment and haul the weapons back to the ships. SGT Devries returned with three extra men from the third squad to help with all of the equipment. He said there were other ships coming in from Pleiku and wanted the prisoners put on so that they could be taken back to the POW camp. They were a little unhappy about putting prisoners, ammo and weapons on the same ships. Dick went with them hanging onto the NVA Officer. I guess he would get a free ride into Pleiku that night and maybe be able to collect some money for the weapons at the POW camp. We were still extracting all the weapons and burning equipment. We had a large assortment of 122mm rockets, lots of AK47’s and five Russian made RPG7 SAs which had night scopes on them and could be used against aircraft. They were the newest thing to be introduced to the battlefield and are still used today in Iraq and Afghanistan. We kept one of the weapons and put it on display in the Orderly Room. We then heard the Guns firing up a new area a little over a click away. I received a call from the C&C who wanted me to move to where the Guns were operating. I told them that I could not comply at this time with all the prisoners and equipment to be secured, and besides it would be dark in less than an hour. We started finishing up and moving back to our aircraft and left a lot of equipment burning behind. When we landed back at Holloway it was dark. I started walking back up to the Orderly Room. I met a Captain near the top of the hill who started telling me about not complying with the orders from the C&C ship. My mind often wonders in situations like this. When I was with the 1/17th CAV, 82nd ABN, back in Detroit for the 1967 riots I busted a guy on the side of the head with my M-16 and my stock shattered sending my buffer group pinging across the street, but I was carrying a CAR15 which had a metal stock that would not break. He finally finished his tirade. I told him, in so many words, that I was in charge of the Blues and I made all the final decisions on the ground and that I would welcome anyone to come down at any time and take over, but you better bring flashlights with you so that you could find your way out of the jungle at night. I brushed past him and headed for the Orderly Room. I asked the clerk for a pen and paper and then wrote a short situation report and put down several of my men’s names that deserved recognition for that day. That was the last big battle for the Blues after which we would only insert to rescue downed pilots and aircraft or to kill or capture a few NVA. I left country the

beginning of November and seven weeks after I left they completely dissolved and the ARVNs took over.

SGT Tony Morton recalls: I remember this day very well. We were inserted around the Cobra and it wasn't a hot area. Suddenly we heard the helicopters firing and we were in this fire fight. My job was to stay with SSG Wells with my M-60. I am sure we didn't realize there were this many NVA in this area because we started running down this trail, taking prisoners as we went. The NVA were confused and just weren't that good. I remember their faces – young kids. I also remember at one point we had more prisoners than we had Blues and got a little worried. I do remember 'Dick,' our Kit Carson Scout, talking to them. We gathered up lots of them and escorted them to the helicopters who took them someplace. There were certainly more than six – I'd guess at least twenty. They seemed to come out of nowhere. Some were playing dead. I remember PFC McCoy kicked one of them and he made a sound, so we grabbed him. We also took equipment – lots of stuff and people. I have pictures of an RPG but we captured food and AK47s. I also remember we set some of their stuff on fire. There were also dead NVA in the woods. We were on the ground a long time. There was lots of firing and maneuvering as we covered the area.

Many of the Blues were awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for heroism via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 9163 dated 16 September 1970. The citation reads in part – these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while serving as members of an aero-rifle platoon on a reconnaissance mission northeast of Pleiku. After intensive airstrikes on a company size enemy element, the aero rifle platoon was inserted to assess the damage dealt the enemy. When the platoon took intense fire from enemy soldiers on the edge of a rice paddy, they immediately placed suppressive fire on the enemy position and quickly silenced it. Continuing the mission the platoon was again pinned down by enemy fire. Displaying great courage and tactical expertise, they again routed the insurgents. During the long engagement they captured or killed a large number of enemy troops and also captured large quantities of enemy equipment. The following were listed for this award: SGT William Devries, SP4 Richard Greggersen, SP4 George Knetsar, PFC Harold McCoy, SP4 Joseph Mellon, SGT Anthony Morton, SP4 Leonardo Polczynski, and SSG Thomas Wells 6th OLC.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12940 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

During the second half of the month, B Troop supported MR II in the Pleiku and Kontum areas but reported nothing of significance.

On the 14th, C Troop's Scouts followed a well-used trail to a large bunker complex; one having a radio antenna. Guns and air strikes were employed and several secondary explosions were observed. During a BDA, C Troop's Blues discovered four NVA KBA and captured one RR and two RPGs.

On the 15th, D Troop was tasked to provide a 15-man force to Lane to augment the security.

Also on the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16383 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16152 flown by CPT D.M. Flenniken and observer SP4 T.L. Honaker had minor injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

The OH-6A departed Camp Holloway at approximately 1230 hours. At 1400 hours, the pilot, CPT Flenniken, heard a loud bang from the rear of the aircraft and experienced sudden yawing of the aircraft to the left and right, accompanied by severe vibrations. CPT Flenniken checked his instruments and found that the N1 fluctuated 10% each way. Also, he determined that the N2 was a constant 103% and the TOT 630 degrees. CPT Flenniken then elected to fly the aircraft to Pleiku AFB, where emergency firefighting and rescue equipment were available. CPT Flenniken was following a paved road at 800 feet AGL in order to have a forced landing area available. At 1405 hours, CPT Flenniken heard another loud band from the rear of the aircraft. At that time the vibrations ceased and the aircraft became quiet. It was at this second band that the aircraft lost its tail rotor blades and the tail rotor quill. Immediately, CPT Flenniken entered autorotation believing he had an engine failure. CPT Flenniken elected to autorotate to a grassy field west of the road. On short final, he determined that what had occurred was tail rotor loss and not engine failure, as power was still available. He then made a running autorotative landing. During the autorotation, SP4 Honaker jettisoned the ammunition and grenades. Initial contact with the ground was made by the right rear portion of the skids. At that time the main rotor blades flexed and severed the tail boom at the mounting point. SP4 Honaker exited the aircraft while CPT Flenniken attempted to control it enough to shut it down. Unable to completely shut down the aircraft CPT Flenniken also exited. The aircraft then performed several 360 degree revolutions about its mast and then turned over on its right side. The aircraft's main rotor blades were destroyed and a small post crash fire developed in the grass and in the left side of the engine compartment. The Aero-rifle Platoon Sergeant, arriving approximately 10 minutes later, had his men tip the aircraft upright while he pulled the fuel shut off value. The fire was extinguished when the fuel shut off value was pulled. The pilot and observer were returned to base camp and the aircraft was recovered one hour later.

The Squadron OR-LL states that CPT Flenniken in an A Troop LOH experienced a loss of tail rotor and quill. The pilot autorotated and severed the tailboom on touchdown. Unable to shut down the violently vibrating aircraft, the crew exited safely. The tail rotor gear box was sent in for analysis but the tail rotor blades were not recovered even after D Troop spent three days searching for them.

From the 17th through the 27th, C Troop supported the 4th Div southeast of An Khe with no significant findings.

On the 18th, MAJ Jim Trussell assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ Bob Rackley.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16361 flown by WO1 M.T. Farrell and observer SGT J.D. Hucherick who had minor injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and accident summary reads:

The aircraft took off from Camp Holloway at approximately 1730 hours. It was part of a flight of three aircraft performing a VR. There were two OH-6A and one AH-1G helicopters. WO1 Farrell was flying the wing, or second OH-6A aircraft. The operation went along smoothly during the trip to the AO. The weather was clear and the winds were of medium intensity. The OH-6A aircraft were very low, perhaps five or ten feet off the trees in the area where there were trees from forty to fifty feet tall. Both aircraft moved very slowly in and out of translational lift. Often they were hovering out of ground effect. The pilot, WO1 Farrell, noted on one occasion that the N2 decreased somewhat. By reducing collective and adding forward cyclic, he was able to recover the lost RPM. About a minute later, as he was transitioning from a hover to forward flight with a crosswind from his right, he again noted that the N2 was decreasing. Since his skids were almost into the trees, he could not reduce collective, he increased forward cyclic and made a turn to the left to a heading of about 310 degrees, which was directly into the wind. His choice of touchdown areas was limited by altitude, airspeed, and rotor RPM, all of which were low. Since the only other forced landing area in his glide range was a rice paddy with dikes, WO1 Farrell elected to land into the wind in a clear area with a slope. With the engine still running, but the rotor RPM decaying rapidly, the pilot

landed on a clear slope into the wind. The aircraft impacted level, breaking all four Oleo struts. While the pilot was shutting down the aircraft, the observer jumped out. He was then struck on the back of the helmet by one of the main rotor blades and knocked unconscious. The pilot completed the shutdown of the aircraft and went to aid his observer. Immediately there-after, the lead OH-6A landed at the site of the downed aircraft. The observer from the lead aircraft, SP4 James C. Stidem assisted WO1 Farrell in putting SGT Huncherick in the lead OH-6A. The lead pilot, WO1 Jimmie L. Jones flew the injured man to the 71st Evacuation hospital in Pleiku. By this time the crew of the AH-1G on station, piloted by CPT James Bohon had notified A Troop Operations and the necessary recovery elements were immediately launched. The C&C helicopter landed at the crash site and picked up WO1 Farrell. WO1 Jones landed immediately afterward and picked up his observer, SP4 Stidem. The aircraft was subsequently recovered.

The Squadron OR-LL states that pilot Farrell in an A Troop LOH experienced a loss of rotor RPM while in slow flight in the AO. The pilot turned into the wind and landed hard in a sloped clearing. The observer was injured when he immediately exited and ran into the main rotor blades. The cause of the loss of power was unknown, pending fuel control tear-down analysis.

On the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15629 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an AVDAC record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15624 flown by an unnamed crew. The record states this was Combat Incident Damage caused by other combat by ground fire less than .50 cal in size while on an Armed Escort mission. There were no casualties. Search and rescue operations were not required. The helicopter was recovered.

On the 25th, A Troop inserted the Infantry on a storage complex and recovered some US equipment while capturing some NVA rucksacks and weapons. The lone NVA security guard died at his post. They inserted their Blues in another area and found numerous military and religious documents. During the extraction, a Huey piloted by Cughton crashed and turned over in the PZ. The PZ was on sloping ground with two foot deep furrows. One skid hung up, the co-pilot over controlled the aircraft, and the pilot was unable to save the aircraft. Even though the aircraft turned up-side down, no one was seriously injured.

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16335 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss record for A Troop UH-1H #67-17750 flown by Aircraft Commander CW2 S.E. Oughton and CPT T.E. Galyean. There were four unnamed passengers. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

CW2 Oughton and CPT Galyean performed preflight on the UH-1H at approximately 0800 hours. The aircraft was accepted and found to have no major discrepancy. They departed Camp Holloway at 1505 hours and proceeded to the PZ, coordinates AR935652. Upon arrival at the PZ they received landing instructions from the Scouts to use an approach heading of 270 degrees. The PZ was small but CW2 Oughton decided to let CPT Galyean make the extraction. During the last 50 feet of the approach it was necessary to almost maintain zero airspeed as well as vertical descent. CPT Galyean continued the approach reaching approximately a 2-3 foot hover above the plowed field which had furrows approximately 2-3 feet deep. Before the aircraft was stabilized members of

the Aero Rifle Platoon began to board from the left. The aircraft dipped to the left and CPT Galyean made a right cyclic correction, at which time CW2 Oughton took control. His first correction was to apply left cyclic and increase pitch, causing the aircraft to tilt severely to the left. At this point, CW2 Oughton made a cyclic correction to the right, but by this time, the aircraft was out of control. The aircraft turned over to the right and came to rest upside down. The Aircraft Commander shut down the aircraft then exited it. There were no injuries.

CW2 Sam Oughton provided: I joined A Troop during second week of January 1970 and flew with the Lift Platoon until I DEROSed in January 1971. On this day I'm certain Coley Elazier was the CE and John England the Gunner on 750. I flew with them often. They were both black men. This entire day was also on the job training for CPT Galyean who was new in our unit. Earlier in the day, at 10 a.m. we had departed Holloway to insert the Blues. I remember the furrows in the cultivated field and how we'd lowered the power to let the ship settle near the ground so the Infantry wouldn't have to jump from 30 feet up. When we departed Holloway we were chalk 3 on the extract. I remember that we had to land on a hill en route so the gunner could lock the latches for the right engine cowling. The accident summary reports the events as I remember them. I am just glad no one was seriously injured that day.

SGT Tony Morton recalls: This was a routine extraction. We were trying to get on the Huey in a hurry. There were about seven of us but we all loaded from one side. As we started to take-off, the Huey started to tip over and I slid completely out of the aircraft with at least one other person. I landed in one of the furrows of the cultivated field and the Huey literally landed on top of me. I remember the green house over the pilots' area in the Huey was touching me. I was pinned from about my waist down. I believe I was the only one pinned by the wreckage. I could see sparks and was worried about a fire. My friends started digging with their rifles to loosen the dirt around me. I was yelling and screaming – GET ME OUT! They did. My right leg had some bad cuts over my shin. One of our ships landed and they took me to the hospital at Pleiku. There they cut my fatigues and put some clips on my skin. I remember seeing the blood and just knew I was seriously hurt; but I wasn't. The hospital scared me – there were some really seriously injured people there. I complained that I wanted to leave but ended up staying the night. The next day, A Troop sent a Huey for me and I recovered at the troop area. I have pictures of me with a cane for about two weeks.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop UH-1H #66-16651 flown by WO1 D.A. Caraker and copilot 1LT R.O. Williams. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

In the afternoon, WO1 Caraker, 1LT Williams and crew were on a training flight. WO1 Caraker had given 1LT Williams two talk-down GCA's into Hensel Airfield located at Camp Enari, 11 miles south of Camp Holloway. WO1 Caraker then put on the hood and was flying on the instruments with 1LT Williams giving him talk-down CGA. They were flying at approximately 3600 feet (700 feet AGL), heading 210 degrees, approximately 5 miles south east of Hensel Airfield. WO1 Caraker heard a whining noise and assumed it was the hydraulics going out. He immediately slowed the aircraft to 70 knots and entered a left turn in order to return to Pleiku Air Base. While in the turn, WO1 Caraker took off his hood and was reaching for the hydraulics switch when he noticed the engine tachometer at 6000 RPM. He immediately entered autorotation and noted the rotor tachometer at 300 RPM and N1 gas producer indicating 10%. WO1 Caraker believes he saw the hydraulic caution panel warning light on when he cross-checked his instruments in autorotation. WO1 Caraker initiated a May Day call on emergency UHF but was unable to complete the May Day call. WO1 Caraker continued the left turn while in autorotation in order to make an open area on a hillside. At approximately 75 feet AGL WO1 Caraker discontinued the left turn and put the aircraft into a flare. Direction of flight was approximately 340 degrees, and the rotor tachometer

indicated 300 rotor RPM. At approximately 15 feet AGL, WO1 Caraker pulled initial pitch. The aircraft had a forward ground speed of approximately 12 knots. WO1 Caraker used more collective pitch to cushion the aircraft to the ground and the aircraft touched down in a skids level configuration. After initial contact the aircraft bounced back into the air and was in a nose low attitude when it again made contact with the ground. The aircraft skidded for approximately 12 feet on the forward portion of the skids. The aircraft had almost come to a stop when the right front skid broke and the aircraft rolled on its right side. WO1 Caraker completed the shutdown of the aircraft and the crew exited through the left cargo door.

SP4 Gary Luke recalls: I joined A Troop in July 1969. I was a 67V20, a LOH mechanic, and became a LOH CE. At that time, our LOH CEs did not have to fly in the OA unless they volunteered. Everytime I went out it was on a volunteer basis. On this day, the Huey CE (sadly I can not remember his name) needed a gunner and for some reason I volunteered. I remember watching the GCA training near Hensel mentioned in the accident summary. After about an hour, lucky for me, I moved from the gunner's well to the normal troop seats. After the crash, the Huey ended up on its right side, so I would have been smashed by the M60 gun and mount. Everyone exited the aircraft but the pilot in the right seat didn't get out, so we went back and got him plus an M-60. I believe the right seat pilot had a broken leg. We had crashed in a field. The ship was smoking but did not burn. We moved away from the Huey and set up the M-60 in the field. These six or seven Montagnards came out with SKSs held overhead and set up a little perimeter without speaking to us. About an hour later, more like forever, one of our ships landed and took both pilots to the hospital. Since the CE and I were OK, we rode back home with the Troop. I remember the maintenance guys were interested in how badly damaged the transmission area was but I don't remember how it was recovered. I had 20 days left in country at that time.

WO Hubert M. "Mike" Cochran commented on C Troop's activities:

July through October were spent in normal operations in the AO. We lost a couple of OH-6s during this time. It seems that one was lost northwest of Phu Cat by an apparent tail rotor strike possibly caused by small arms fire. The aircraft was slung back to maintenance, stripped, slung back to where it went down, punched off from the maintenance Huey and fired at with tracer rounds until it ignited. All in a day's work. The other OH-6 was lost in the AO west of LZ English. The talk at the time said the cause of the crash was due to a "Hughes tailspin." This phenomenon is referred to as a loss of tailrotor effectiveness today. The aircraft first impacted on a ridge and rolled into a ravine. The observer was apparently ejected and was impaled on something and later died of his injuries at LZ English. The pilot was in pretty bad shape and was medevaced to English and on to Qui Nhon. We visited him in the hospital before he was evacuated to Japan and he looked like hell. During this time period I had my first experience with the monsoon season. There were days when we couldn't fly due to the heavy rain. I remember that when clothes were washed they would not dry since the air was saturated with moisture. I also had a close call one day when flying in bad weather. We almost had a head-on with a C-130 in the vicinity of Phu Cat. The lack of visibility and the low ceiling helped to put a little excitement in the lives of a couple of Air Force and Cav pilots that day.

September 1970

We will start this period by quoting liberally from a debrief conducted by Army historical personnel of Rudy DeFrance who was the Squadron Commander until the 7th. This debriefing took the form of 20 questions (surrounded by "()" in the paragraph to follow) and Rudy's answers.

(The interviewer asked for background information.) I graduated from fixed wing flight school in 1957 and served several years in both air and ground assignments with the 14th Armored Cav in Germany. I was really glad to command the 7/17th on my second tour in Vietnam. During most the six months I commanded the Squadron, A Troop supported the 4th Div, B Troop supported the

ARVNs primary in the Pleiku and Kontum area, and C Troop supported the 173rd Abn. Only twice during that period did I have the entire Squadron all together. On 21 July, we were able to reorganize under a new TO&E that had a LT as the infantry rifle platoon leader in each ARP. It also integrated the former direct support maintenance and avionics detachments into each ACT. (The interviewer had heard comments from other units that their MAJs and CPTs had less experience than in "the old days" and that the warrant and commissioned officers coming out of flight school were not adequately trained for Vietnam duty.) I certainly did not find either of these cases in the 7/17th. The senior officers were all on their second tours, were experienced aviators and did an outstanding job. Because we always operated as a team and because the morale and esprit was so high, the new pilots quickly learned from the experienced ones and built on what they had learned in flight school. We had a number of experienced people extend their tour which helped us with needed skills. There may have been isolated areas where a good maintenance NCO's DEROS came and there was no one to replace him; but overall we were staffed at adequate levels with appropriately skilled people. (He was asked how he influenced troop operations.) I tried very hard not to intercede or to take over and run the troop for the Troop Cmdr, while they were in an AO. I would say that my influence in troop operations was on the nature of advice, prior to an operation. On occasion, after an operation, I would have a commander come to my office where we could critique the actions; particularly if we lost some aircraft or something went wrong. The Troop Cmdrs were knowledgeable and proficient in their operations. (He was asked do the ground commanders understand and properly utilize your unit.) I can say that without many exceptions, the ground commanders did not understand and did not know how to properly use Air Cav. Air Cav is still a new operation and it took continual education, coordination and orientation of ground commanders to teach them how to get the best results. The key was to get them to see that Air Cav has a mission to perform and that it is not just an aviation asset for them to use. They had to realize that if an ACT is not used as a team, it is not effective. (Concerning the accident rate.) Unfortunately all ACSs have an above average accident rate and our's was high. I think there are several reasons for this. First and foremost is the very mission of Air Cav, particularly with the LOHs, because the pilot has to neglect the helicopter in order to perform his mission. This is something you have to see to understand; something many a senior aviation commander didn't do first hand. This is especially true in MR II because of the terrain. Going up and down those mountains caused many accidents. We were criticized for being too mission oriented and for not being safety oriented. We had excellent safety and training programs that I believe were equal to and in many instances surpassed other aviation units. I am happy to say that during the rainy season we didn't have any accidents as a result of weather. During the dry season, dust did present a problem during landings, takeoffs, and hovering. We had a Cobra go IFR while hovering into a revetment and crash. The reason for this was a lack of instrument proficiency time in this area. There were three requests for panel time put in where the specific action occurred. If there had been a command emphasis from a higher headquarters for instrument time, the accident would never have happened. The density altitude up at Dalat was very often above 7,000 feet yet our units operated there without any accidents. This is a result of command emphasis by the commanders and a continual evaluation of the environment. Because of the organization of the ACTs and the Squadron and because of the maintenance and supply support we have and received, we had enough aircraft at all times to perform our mission. I would venture to say that in each ACT there were only three or four aviators who reached the Bde limit of 140 flying hours per month. We usually had sufficient men to fly in that man's place and the Flight Surgeons watched for aviator fatigue. (He was asked to describe his favorite accomplishment.) When I look back at my tour I especially appreciate the Squadron's efforts during the month of April in the Dak Seang, Dak To area. The reason for this was because it was the heaviest area of enemy contact and we were supporting the ARVNs with D Troop and two ACTs. We developed the situation to the extent that the ARVNs could no longer react to it because they were completely committed. It was also our period of

heaviest contact and especially the ACTs responded in a maximum effort for the entire month. I look back with pride at the job everyone in the Squadron did and not just the air crews but the maintenance personnel as well. The maintenance people had to perform at about 125 percent extra effort, working all night long, mess halls being open until 1 a.m. and everyone just really pitched in to help out. (He was asked to assess the effectiveness of the Vietnamization program.) I would have to say that in our AO, often the ACTs would develop a situation and call on the ARVNs for the reactionary force. They are still a little hesitant to react to a situation we develop and at periods of time when we had an aircraft shot down and our men inserted and in contact, it would be a day and a half before we could get the reaction force. This is not a satisfactory situation to be in. We did train some ARVN infantry men and they responded very well to what we developed.

During this entire month, C Troop supported the 173rd Abn around LZ English. On the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two C Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. (1) #66-07907 during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. (2) #67-16335 during the attack on target, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 4th, **SP4 Otis Eugene Plants** drowned in the An Khe River while serving with C Troop. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 9 Feb 1970 and his MOS as 11B20.

David Stinson recalls: As a result of my involvement in the 7/17th Cav website and emails, this past weekend (June, 2000) I dug around in the attic and (with much help from my wife of 31+ years) found all of the letters I sent to her from Vietnam and five of the voice cassettes. Becky has kept these for 30 years and I've never once looked at them or listened to the tapes. I was listening to a tape today and lo and behold on that tape I told Becky in great detail the story of a young trooper named Plants who drowned while washing a truck in the An Khe River just prior to a big inspection. According to my telling, Plants had been with the 1st Infantry division as a grunt and transferred to C Troop. Also according to the tape, another trooper named Carter jumped in the river and tried valiantly to save Plants. Even though he had him for a minute, the current was too strong and Plants was fighting both the current and Carter. Finally Plants pulled free and was lost. CPT Hennies asked me to write up Carter for a Soldier's Medal, which I apparently did.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16383 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, in the operations area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right windshield, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 7th, LTC Ernie Smart assumes command of the 7/17th Cav replacing LTC Rudy DeFrance.

Also on the 7th, while observing a large cave complex a C Troop LOH received heavy small arms fire and crashed. The crew was extracted by the C&C. After this extraction, C Troop was diverted to help a friendly unit in heavy contact. They provided close air support and used artillery and airstrikes until darkness. On the way home, they received intense 51 cal fire and observed an air burst. Airstrikes were called in but darkness prevented any follow-up. For this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16008 flown by an unnamed crew who had two injuries at grid BR878743. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

On the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16383 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission,

during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 9th, the Squadron OR-LL states the CPT Hafner in a B Troop Huey experienced a hard landing due to low rotor RPM during a check ride. The pilot initially saw that he was going to land short of the runway on an autorotation. The IP took control and attempted a power recovery, but the throttle was binding. The IP stretched the glide losing RPM, which resulted in a hard landing. The throttle linkage was found to be excessively dirty and the throttle bearing was sent in for analysis. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17723 flown by CPT J.S. Halley and Instructor Pilot CPT S.F. Hafner. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

At 1300 hours, after pre-flighting the aircraft, CPT Hafner and CPT Halley took off from the Christmas Tree at Camp Holloway for a check ride at the hover test area at Camp Holloway. After CPT Halley performed four or five successful landings, CPT Hafner demonstrated a basic touchdown autorotation on the paved strip at the hover test area. Then CPT Hafner instructed CPT Halley to perform an autorotation to the strip. CPT Halley entered an autorotation, and the pilots checked the gauges to verify that the rotor was in the low green and the N1 was 72%. At 300 feet AGL, it became apparent to both pilots that the aircraft would land short of the lane, so CPT Hafner took control of the aircraft, intending to make a power recovery. CPT Hafner attempted to roll on the throttle, but was unable to do so, because the throttle was binding. He continued to attempt to roll on the throttle until he was between 75-100 feet AGL when he realized that he would have to complete the autorotation to the ground. CPT Hafner tried to stretch his glide. When he reached the end of the land, he felt he was too low to decelerate much without striking the tailboom. Therefore, he began cushioning the aircraft with pitch, as the aircraft fell rapidly through 10 feet AGL. It landed hard, hitting first on the left rear skid, with a forward ground speed of 30-40 knots. The aircraft bounced about two feet up in the air. CPT Hafner still had directional control of the aircraft. The aircraft hit the lane again, bumping side to side. It then turned 90 degrees to the right, coming to rest 255 feet from the initial point of impact. CPT Hafner then notified B Troop Operations and the Control Tower of the accident, by means of his radio. Both pilots, together, were able to roll off the throttle. They shut down the aircraft and exited. There were no injuries and there was no fire.

On the 10th, CPT Mike Servitelle assumed command of D Troop replacing CPT Vincent Falconio.

From the 10th for the rest of the month, A Troop supported the 4th Div. The history states that A Troop had a LOH was shot down and the crew evacuated with minor injuries. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16652 flown by an unnamed crew who had 2 injuries at grid BR734652. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom tail section, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

On the 13th, A Troop's unit history states their Scouts found NVA soldiers in a bunker complex south of An Khe but didn't draw any fire. The Guns expended and on the way back one piloted by CPT Clausen experienced an engine failure. Having no suitable force landing area, the pilot crashed into the trees. The crew was extracted and the Scouts observed an NVA squad moving toward the downed Cobra. They killed six before bad weather chased A Troop from the area. Due to enemy presence, the aircraft was not recovered and the cause of the engine failure could not be determined. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with injuries record for A Troop AH-1G #68-15193 flown by CPT D.J. Clausen and copilot WO1 O.H. Davidsmeyer who was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

CPT Clausen and WO1 Davidsmeyer departed LZ Two Bits at BR843953, at approximately 1530 hours with a full load of fuel and ammunition. In order to avoid thunderstorm activity, cross

country-flight was required. At 1600 hours flying a 245 degree heading from LZ English the engine failed while over mountainous terrain at 5200 MSL. Just prior to engine failure, the instruments indicated 33-34 pounds of torque with the N1 97.3% and 590 degrees EGT. The engine oil pressure was 87 PSI with a temperature of 78 degrees C. The ECU (Environment Control Unit) was in use. The indication of the engine failure was a loud band followed by a violent yaw of the aircraft to the left. CPT Clausen entered autorotation and attempted to jettison his wing-stores but was unable to do so. The intercom system became inoperative, thus he could not talk with his copilot. At approximately 400 feet AGL, CPT Clausen saw a small clearing which contained small tree stumps and under growth. A 180 degree turn was initiated to reach the area, but the area was over shot and the forced landing terminated in the jungle. CPT Clausen climbed out of the aircraft and broke the copilot's canopy in order to get his copilot out of the aircraft. He did not shut any of the switches off. However there was no fire. After expending his ordnance the lead Cobra landed in the stump filled area and extracted the injured copilot. CPT Clausen and the copilot of the lead Cobra remained in the LZ and were later extracted. A rifle platoon was enroute to secure the downed aircraft when a platoon size enemy force was sighted moving into the crash site. A Troop's Scouts took the enemy under fire and artillery was adjusted into the area. Before the enemy could be quelled, weather and darkness forced the rifle platoon and A Troop from the area. Artillery was employed throughout the night. The next morning, the Scouts found that an artillery round had struck the downed AH-1G causing its total destruction.

Also on the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07786 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, they made a forced landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16381 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

D/2/1st Cav Assigned to 7/17th Cav

On the 15th, the Squadron assumed operational control of D/2/1st Cav stationed at Phan Thiet and supporting the 23rd ARVN.

Also on the 15th, A Troop had a LOH shot down and extracted the crew. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12940 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 40 feet and 40 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 15th, B Troop started training ARPs from the 22nd ARVN in the Dak To and Kontum area. Finally, on this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17790 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury at grid ZB122362. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 40 knots of airspeed, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. [Editor's note: While the VHPA database may have LOH 790 assigned to B Troop, this may be the A Troop LOH mentioned above.]

On the 18th, the OR_LL states that pilot Thorpe in a C Troop AH-1G had a tail rotor strike a conex container. The pilot picked the aircraft up to a hover, turned approximately 90 degrees in the L-shaped revetment and the tail rotor struck a conex container the Post Engineers had placed near the revetment while working on the airfield drainage. The result was a hard landing and damage to the tail rotor drive

train; but no injuries. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15819 flown by CW2 S.D. Thorpe and Armament Technician SP5 T.W. Cartwright. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

On the 18th this AH-1G was flown on a regular mission in the AO. Upon its return from the AO, CW2 Thorpe, the Armament Officer, inspected the aircraft log books to determine if the aircraft was due its preventive maintenance Periodic Inspection. Since this was due, the aircraft would have to be disarmed prior to being moved to the maintenance hanger. The removal of the XM-28 Subsystem and ammunition was accomplished in the revetment. Since there was no way to transport the rockets to the ammunition point, CW2 Thorpe elected to fly the aircraft there accompanied by SP5 Cartwright who was in the front seat. After the aircraft was started and the cockpit checks were made, CW2 Thorpe brought the aircraft to a hover and began to maneuver out of the revetment. CW2 Thorpe felt the read skids of the aircraft settle into the mud in the revetment and increased power while attempting to turn the nose of the aircraft to the west. While attempting to gain a more favorable wind condition by turning the tail of the aircraft to the east, the tail rotor struck the conex. After initial impact, the tail of the aircraft swung immediately to the left, approximately 90 degrees with the skids making contact with the ground. Upon touchdown, the aircraft began rocking violently, causing the main rotor blade to strike the conex and the revetment. Parts of the aircraft, including the tail rotor assembly, 90 gear box, and pylon access door, separated from the aircraft between initial impact and aircraft touchdown. CW2 Thorpe completed the shut down of the aircraft, with both personnel remaining in the aircraft until the rotor blades stopped.

SSG Henry Montgomery provides some details about C Troop's Cobra maintenance: This was my second tour in Vietnam but my first in aircraft maintenance. I was a tanker in the 11th ACR on my first tour, then I went to wheel and track mechanic school and finally into aircraft maintenance. I joined C Troop at Lane in January 1970 as the Cobra platoon NCO. I remember working with CPT Carvill, the weapons platoon leader. We had a crew chief for each of our nine Cobras and I supervised them. Most of them were good mechanics that did a good job and took good care of their ships. I enjoyed working with them. The armorers worked on our weapons systems but I didn't supervise them. I wish I could remember the names of the CEs who worked for me but I can't. I do recall my assistant. He was SP4 Whit, a white guy from Mississippi. He was more mature than the others – a very good soldier, so I made him my assistant. I also enjoyed working with the Maintenance Platoon guys. PSG Merritt, from Tennessee, was the Maintenance NCO – really a wonderful guy! Let me tell you about a real scare PSG Merritt and I had one night. One of the Cobra mechanics was into drugs and had lots of problems on that flight line when we were at Lane. He missed the movement to An Khe. Now in a combat situation like Vietnam, this was a serious mistake – something like desertion. A couple of days later he shows up at An Khe and rejoins the unit. Because of this mistake and the other problems we'd had with him on the flight line, I turned him over to the First Sergeant. I believe he received an Article 15 and was transferred to Pleiku. I believe he had some friends in the Blues. Anyway, a few days later he returned to 'visit his friends.' PSG Merritt and I soon learned that he was looking for the two of us with a weapon and some grenades and that he'd told his friends that he was going to kill us. It was late at night – after most everyone had turned in. I remember sitting in PSG Merritt's room, back to back, with the lights off and each of us with a weapon in hand. Eventually the guy came to our barracks. He was armed with a 45, no grenades. The CQ had alerted the First Sergeant and the Maintenance Officer. I can't remember his name. He was a Captain – a big guy. When he got in to fly a helicopter, he certainly filled the seat! Anyway, this Captain meets up with the guy carrying the 45 and some how took the weapon from him. Needless to say but I appreciated that Maintenance Officer even more after that incident! I have many memories from C Troop. One that stands out in my mind happened at An Khe one evening not too long before we moved back to Lane. It was after dinner and I was talking to SSG Nash. He was a white guy from Indiana and was the maintenance NCO for the Hueys. We

were talking about home when we saw these explosions on the flight line. At first we thought it was a rocket attack but then we realized it was a sapper attack. There was a big mound in the center of the flight line and I think those VC came out from a tunnel inside the compound. Luckily no one was injured but I think we lost a couple of Hueys. We had some Cobras damaged but not too seriously. C Troop had a maintenance warrant officer we called 'Sober Charlie' because he was also drinking Mateuse wine. He was from Detroit, Michigan and usually showed up late for work. However, that evening he got a Cobra up in the air soon after the attack started. The biggest challenge the maintenance platoon had with the Cobras was to keep the pilots from over stressing the components; that is making the aircraft do more than it was designed to do. We had a CW2 or CW3, an older guy who had been a test pilot for Bell Helicopter. He was a very good pilot. When I first joined C Troop, I think there was an E-7 serving as First Sergeant, then just prior to our move to An Khe we got this older black man who was a First Sergeant. He had served with the 1st Cav Division on his first tour. He even wore a cav hat! I remember the Mess Sergeant was Bresshet(?) from Louisiana. C Troop was a good unit. I enjoyed serving with them and if I had to do it all over again, I would! I left C Troop in November 1970 and retired from the Army in 1983. After that I worked for McDonald Douglas for six years and then NASA for sixteen years. I am now completely retired.

On the 19th, the OR-LL states that pilot Hebert in a B Troop LOH experienced an engine failure on take off and the aircraft landed hard. The pilot received back injuries when the collapsible seat failed to collapse due to a tech manual under the seat. The copilot was struck in the head by the turning rotor blades after exiting the helicopter. The cause of the engine failure would be determined by teardown analysis. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss record with injuries record for B Troop OH-6A #69-16006 flown by WO1 G.M. Hebert and copilot CPT H.H. Cleveland at grid BS180045. Both pilots sustained injuries. [Editor's note: Horst Cleveland was known as "Butch."] The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

At 0600 hours, WO1 Hebert and SP5 Jack R. Arnold took off on a VR of the local area, which lasted one hour and fifteen minutes. At 0915 hours, WO1 Hebert and CPT Cleveland took off for the AO. They refueled at Kontum and arrived at ZB158058. At 1015 hours, WO1 Hebert and CPT Cleveland started up the aircraft to go out on a mission. At 1225 hours, they took off to the northwest and upon reaching a height of 15 feet and 20 knots airspeed, the engine failed in the N2 turbine section. The aircraft spun 180 degrees to the left, at which time WO1 Hebert elected to try and land on the road to the southeast rather than the ditch below him. To achieve this he lowered his collective and added forward cyclic. About five feet above the ground, WO1 Hebert added aft cyclic and pulled in collective pitch to slow his rate of descent. The aircraft fell rapidly landing hard on the tailboom and rear skids, bounced up, hit on the left front skid and belly and come to a rest. CPT Cleveland pulled the fuel shut off value while WO1 Hebert shut off the electrical switches. About this time both crew members noticed the cockpit was filling rapidly with smoke from a yellow smoke grenade which had gone off and they exited the aircraft. WO1 Hebert exited the right side of the aircraft and collapsed in the ditch, while CPT Cleveland exited to the left in a crouched position and was struck by a rotor blade. CPT Cleveland and WO1 Hebert were evacuated to Camp Holloway for medical treatment.

CPT Jon Mitchell recalls: I reported to B Troop in September 1970. I'd served with B Company 25th Aviation Bn in 68-69 on my first tour. I'd flown LOHs and guns with them. Between tours I'd gone to Cobra school and then Cobra IP school. However, after CPT Horst 'Butch' Cleveland was injured, I become the Scout Platoon leader. I'd stay in that job for about six months. Then the Troop Commander gave that job to a young Captain and I moved to the gun platoon. I wasn't senior enough to be the gun platoon leader. We had a MP Branch guy, CPT John Crosby, who was senior.

I served as a Cobra IP during my entire year. I believe there were times when I was the only Cobra IP in II Corps. I stayed busy.

On the 24th, A Troop was working an AO near FB Crystal when they were alerted to help break an attack on FB Digger. A few minutes after A Troop arrived over Digger, the enemy ended the battle. A Troop's Lift and the Medevac ships spent much of the rest of the day removing the wounded and restoring the FB to normal. On the 24th, B Troop was sent to Phu Hiep to support the 22nd ARVN in an area northwest of Tuy Hoa. Enemy activity was heavy and they killed two NVA when they found a large training site complete with bleachers and eight hooches.

From the 26th until 2 Oct, B Troop supported the 3rd ARVN Cav and the 47th ARVN Inf in the Pleiku area. These operations results in three enemy KBA and sightings of stepped up enemy activity.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16136 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the the cargo section, they made a forced landing, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

Also on the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #69-15977 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right bottom fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 27th, A Troop's Scouts observed one individual. The Guns expended and the Blues were inserted. They found two killed and approximately 14 structures destroyed.

On the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16089 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom mid fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

On the 30th, A Troop observed eight enemy soldiers taking evasive action and killed them.

Also on the 30th, MAJ Glenn Carr assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Leighton Haselgrove.

The 30th was the ending period for the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for HHT. In 1974 via DA General Order #6, HHT was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 1 Jan 1969 to 30 Sep 1970.

CW2 Dennis Bartash recalls: About half way through my first year with B Troop, I got sucked back into maintenance. I was assigned to the 569th TC Detachment as a Cobra test pilot. I was upset because I really wanted to fly combat, but that was not to be. I worked for CPT Bill Petrak. He was a nice guy. The rest of that year went by uneventfully. However, during one test flight I had a very scary experience. The Cobra had received a lot of electric work. It was not unusual for us to put one of the maintenance EM in the front seat for a test flight. This day I took a SP4 or SP5 avionics specialist with me. I remember running through all the normal checks and decided to do a topping check. The weather around Holloway suddenly changed. As bad luck would have it, I experienced a complete instrument failure just about the time we flew into the soup. Even the radios were out. I remember concentrating on the airspeed indicator. Every time I looked out of the cockpit, I became even more disoriented. I asked the guy in front if he could see anything – no. Then the airspeed started to climb and I remember thinking we must be in a dive. Whenever I looked outside – everything was missed up in my mind. Things just didn't look right at all. I had just enough time and altitude to recover when we finally broke out of the soup – but just barely. I tell people that another hundredth of a second less recovery time and we would have plowed it in. I was really scared that day. Incoming rockets and 51 cal fire didn't scare me nearly as much as that test flight.

SP6 Wayne Parker of C Troop recalls: I ETSed from the Army in October to end my second tour in Vietnam with the Army. I served with the 23rd Arty Group in 1966-67 at Pho Loi on my first tour. I had been an 67N20 SP5 for a number of years. In late 1968 I was stationed at Fort Eustis and was asked if I wanted to go to school to become a Tech Inspector (TI). Naturally that was always a respected job and it was something of an honor to be asked to join that group of guys, so I went. That earned me the 67W20 MOS. I returned to Vietnam and joined C Troop at An Son in July 1969. Initially there were two other TIs in the troop, so I just did paper work for a while. I was a little apprehensive about actually doing inspections but I got over that. Eventually I was the only TI left and I got promoted to SP6. CPT Fritz Gruetzmacher was the Maintenance Officer and 412th TC Det commander. I also remember working with CPT Wesley Young and CWO Paul Kunkel. Since I was senior I was also the Service Platoon NCOIC. I remember returned from my R&R in Hawaii to learn that a really good LOH CE, Fernando Valdez, had been shot in the arm but we still in the hospital at Qui Nhon. I visited him several times. Then over Christmas in 1970, after I'd gotten out of the Army, he came to visit me and stayed at my house.

CWO Paul Kunkel provides: I joined C Troop in July 1969 after completing AMOC school. I worked in the 412th TC Det my entire tour. I extended in July 1970 and finally left Vietnam on 22 Dec 1970.

October 1970

The 1st was the beginning period for a second RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for HHT. In 1974 via DA General Order #6, HHT was awarded its second RVN Gallantry Cross – this one for the period 1 Oct 1970 to 31 Aug 1972.

D/2/1st Cav Redesignated K Troop, 17th Cavalry

On the 1st, D/2/1st Cav was redesignated K Troop, 17th Air Cav and for the first half of the month continued to work out of Phan Thiet. During this entire month, C Troop again supported the 173rd Abn around LZ English.

From the 3rd through the 9th, B Troop worked the Kontum - Tan Canh area but weather restricted their operations.

On the 4th, C Troop had a LOH shot down by 51 cal while observing a large bunker complex. During the crew extraction, the Guns observed seven NVA fleeing the area and killed them.

Also on the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #66-7907 at grid BR772965. The three un-named crew members had injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 40 knots of airspeed, they had more than 99 holes from 12.7mm type SA/AW, they crashed. The mission terminated and the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14407 flown by an unnamed crew. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bottom cockpit, they continued flying and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

On the 10th, B Troop worked out of Phu Hiep again for the day. Enemy activity in the area was heavy as evidenced by the heavily traveled trails and farming in the remote areas. 22 enemy structures were destroyed by B Troop elements and the ARVN ARP was inserted to secure a downed LOH. This platoon worked very well and the only difficulty encountered was that they had some difficulty re-entering the Lift ships during the extraction. This problem was alleviated by adding straps to the Hueys as hand holds to expedite re-entry.

Also on the 10th, A Troop worked west of Tuy Hoa and found a large bunker complex. The Guns and Scouts worked the area all day, destroyed the complex and killed one NVA.

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16525 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was evacuated and repaired in theater.

Also on the 11th, K Troop's LOHs received fire and their Guns expended resulting in three KBA.

On the 13th, while supporting the 1/50th Mech, K Troop received fire during an LZ prep.

From the 15th through the 25th, B Troop killed ten NVA while supporting the 47th ARVN Inf south and southwest of FSB Oasis in search of elements of the 95B NVA Reg. On the 15th, a B Troop Cobra was shot down and they used A Troop's Blues initially to secure the aircraft. D Troop sent four gun jeeps to relieve the ARPs and they guarded the aircraft until it was lifted out the next morning. Finally on the 15th, an A Troop LOH received heavy AW fire. Air strikes were employed resulting in a secondary explosion rising 2000 feet above the ground. The Blues were inserted but could find only scattered documents in the area. Later in the month, A Troop inserted its Blues to recover the bodies from a 4th Div aircraft that had been shot down on the 20th.

From the 17th until the end of the month, K Troop worked north of Dalat.

On the 22nd, A Troop's Scouts observed an enemy squad. The Blues were inserted, made contact and exchanged fire. Due to bad weather, the Blues were extract after they had swept the area and destroyed some equipment and rice.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15491 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 200 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 30th K Troop stood down for redeployment.

The 31st was the ending period for the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for the Squadron. In 1971 via DA General Order #52 the Squadron was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 1 Jan 1970 to 31 Oct 1970.

1LT Robert C. 'Bob' Williams provides: I reported to A Troop on 14 Oct. I believe it was my first day there when this 1LT walked up to me with a shotgun and said, 'They told me I could go back to flying when the next LT come into the unit – you are now the Blue Platoon leader.' This surprised me more than a little bit because I was an Armor officer. I went to talk to the CO or XO and they said, 'Yeah, we'll get you over there soon.' The next day or so Nixon's famous order came out and the Blues were chopped from the Troop. I started flying with the Lift Platoon. CW2 Dave Caraker, Rook 39, was the Lift Platoon leader. We called him 'Cookie Man' or 'Crackers.' When I made AC I was Rook 35 and usually flew the lead ship in the Lift Platoon but I was never the platoon leader. During my year with A Troop we never lost of Huey or any people in the Lift Platoon. I remember CPT Chuck Belanger flying LOHs for the entire 12 months. I considered him to be a GREAT SCOUT. My first day flying in the AO this tall blond WO was the AC. We must have been flying the chase ship. He got my attention by saying, 'Lieutenant don't touch anything unless I tell you to. First I'm going to show you where to take me in case I get shot.' So we lift off and over-fly the med pad at Holloway then go out to the AO. Then he tells me, 'In the AO FM is for the LOHs only.' We get established in an orbit and I started listening to Chuck Belanger. He was flying as the Scout

Lead for that team. He says, 'King (the callsign for the C&C) we got an 18" hard pack trail with recent usage in the last 3 or 5 hours by 5 people. Two people are carrying something heavy.' He sounded so matter of fact with all this detail. I thought to myself, 'Yeah Right!' The WO noted my disbelief and simply said, 'You watch.' Well, a few minutes later the LOHs lift off from that area and move about a click before they slow down to start working again. After hovering for a few minutes, Chuck comes back on the radio with, 'King, I've got recent usage down here.' 'How recent?' 'Well, water is still filling into the foot prints.' Then a couple of seconds later, 'Damn, I smell dinks.' A split second after that we hear, 'There they are – coming hot!' We hear the roar of the minigun firing over the radio. I see an RPG-7 fired at them but it misses. Chuck says, 'Grape smokes out!' as he moves off this stand of bamboo. The Cobras fire up the place. After a few minutes the LOHs return for a BDA and report two dead bodies, some RPGs on the ground, and two blood trails. Well, from that day forward I was a true believer in the Cav!

CPT Tom Lewis, Undertaker 22, recalls: I DEROSed 11 Nov 1970. For my last couple months or so I served as B Troop's Operations Officer. Most of the time I flew C&C in a Huey. Now and then I'd be part of the Cobra night standby team at Holloway when B Troop had that mission. I remember we tried flying C&C in an OH-6A. I actually thought that worked out fine, but it didn't catch on and we went back to the H Models.

CPT Dale Dunham recalls: With about three months left on my tour, I moved to the Aviation Platoon of HHT from the S-2 shop. The platoon had five Hueys. One was configured as a C&C ship with the extra radio console. I recall we were short pilots. In addition to lots of admin flights, we also provided Hueys and crews when the line troops were short. Naturally, I remember flying with A Troop because I'd served with them. I remember a LT Anderson. He was a good guy and a good pilot. I have bad memories of one flight I made in support of D Troop. They were planning a sweep to the west of Pleiku and wanted to do an aerial reconnaissance first. I think the CO and some of his senior people were in the Huey. He pointed out the routes he was considering. We made low level passes along those routes. Just when I thought we were finished he asked for one more pass and I agreed to do it – big mistake. We flew down the same route the second time and took several hits from the front to the tail rotor. I remember one hitting the radio consol next to me. No one was hurt and the aircraft was repaired, but that was a very close call. I remember another close call while landing a Huey at Tuy Hoa in a terrible rainstorm. I was with a pilot who had recently transferred into our unit. He was approved to fly into Saigon. In those days they wanted only experienced and approved guys flying into and out of Saigon. I wasn't but he was. On the way back we had a box of 48 flight helmets plus four passengers, including a Standardization Instructor Pilot. I don't know why we flew a route along the coast but that was a terrible night at Tuy Hoa. The first thing I did when I returned to the States was to get my Instrument ticket! I also remember a very interesting thing on Christmas Day. A Troop achieved 100% aircraft availability. Most everyone routinely had about 80 or 85%. They were very happy to finally have everything flyable, so they conducted a fly-by of all their aircraft. They put smoke grenades on their skids – the whole show. All in all, I enjoyed my tour with the 7/17th Cav and was proud to serve in such a fine unit. I DEROSed 11 Jan 1971.

CWO Charles Alexander, "Sober Charlie" to this day, recalls: I initially joined C Troop on 9 Jun 1969 so during this period of time I was on my first of two 6-month extensions. About this time we got our first 20-mm equipped Cobra. We just called it a "20 ship." I was the most senior gun pilot and I liked to fly this ship, so I did. Not long after we got it we had another one of those LRRP /Insert the rest of his material here./

SP5 Jerry Robb provides: I was a 68F20 (Aircraft Electrician) right out of AIT from Ft. Eustis when I arrived in Vietnam. There were about 50 guys in my AIT class. Two classmates, Leonard Mottley and Steven Ross, traveled with me to Cam Ranh and up to Nha Trang. Those guys went to A and B

Troops. I was assigned to C Troop – really the 412th TC Det. Funny how you learn things fast in Vietnam. When we were finished being “processed” in Nha Trang, they told us to get to Pleiku. I remember we asked, “When is the next scheduled flight?” They looked at us with a strange look on their faces and said, “Just find one.” Well, we quickly learned that unless you wanted to pull guard and KP duty, you’d best find a flight out of there! It took me a couple of days to get to An Son. I reported into the Orderly Room and after the 1st SGT was done with me he said, “Here comes a jeep. It will take you to your hooch.” So I put my stuff in the back and jump in the back seat. There was an officer sitting in the front seat. I remember thinking that this guy really looked familiar. While we were riding it came to me. When I got out I asked him his name - 1LT Richard L. Peters. We had been in the same Boy Scout Troop years earlier. He was a few years older than me but I still remembered him. Small world!!! It was actually a great relief to me to know someone from my hometown when I first arrived in Vietnam. A few months later he pulled a joke on me. I was working on a Cobra. He came over to talk to me. I told him I was having a problem with this one guage but thought I’d corrected it. He asked if I wanted to check it out on a test flight. I said OK. So I got in the front seat without a flight helmet and we took off. The guage was working fine so I was just enjoying the ride and the view. Suddenly the ship started acting a little funny. I looked in the little rear-view mirror so I could see his face. His eyes were shut! Naturally I panicked and reached for those small controls sticks in the front – as if I knew what to do with them! This lasted a few second and then he opened his eyes with a smile on his face – the joke was on me. When I joined C Troop there was another 68F20 working in the Troop – SP5 Gordon Fietsom. He was a good mentor and showed me the ropes. We overlapped for at least 4 months maybe 5. I think he left in April. After that I was the only one until my replacement arrived a few months before I DEROSed. I remember C Troop had a dog – Tail Rotor. She was always pregnant. One of her puppies we named Sam. That was WO Paul Kunkel’s dog! Mr Kunkel also worked in Maintenance. I knew SSG Pilk. It seems to me that I spent more time at An Khe than I did at An Son. We pulled a lot of guard duty at An Khe. Not only was there the perimeter guards but we also had internal guards on the flight line and in our hooch area. Sappers were a real concern. We all were assigned a weapon. Mine was an M-79. I recall carrying a tool box and my M-79 almost everywhere I went. One of my best friends during that time was an Avionic Mechanic named Robert Landeros. Once a guy named Joe and I were heading back from the flight line on a path. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed some movement. About the same time I hear a hissing sound. I turned my head to get a better view. There was this large Cobra coiled with its hood in full display staring at me! Joe was a step or so behind me. He quickly departed back down the path. Without thinking I threw whatever it was that I was carrying in my hand at the snake. At about the same time the snake struck at me. After releasing whatever I was carrying toward the snake, I turned and ran back down the path. I remember that I actually overtook Joe! I still have a vivid memory of that close encounter. A while later we returned to collect my stuff. Looking back I seem to recall there were a lot of snakes in that base camp. I also remember working with our Maintenance Officer, Mr. White, on a Cobra that had just come out of PE. For some reason it wouldn’t start. He and I worked with it for awhile and finally it cranked. I remember him saying that the ammo had been in the ship for a long time so we’d better get rid of it. He told me to go get a flight helmet. We took off and he shot all the ammo. That was impressive! I DEROSed from An Khe in late November 1970.

November 1970

On the 1st according to the 17th CAG ORLL dated 15 Nov 1971, the 1/22nd Infantry formerly part of the 4th Inf Div was placed OPCON to the 17th CAG with the primary mission of defending the Tuy Hoa Army Installation. The document further states that the 1/22nd conducted airmobile operations, patrols and ambushes outside the perimeter, assigned one rifle company to protect Dong Be Thin, and provided the core of a MR 2 Reaction Force.

On the 2nd, A Troop's C&C received fire while they were working on AO southeast of Pleiku. After the Guns and Scouts worked the area, the Blues were inserted but no further enemy contact was made.

On the 3rd, A Troop's Scouts found a bunkered storage complex west of Camp Enari. The Scouts took fire and the Guns fired up the area. One NVA was killed then an airstrike was used. There were secondary explosions and during the BDA, ten more bodies were counted.

On the 5th, A Troop's C&C received fire from a large enemy compound. Their Guns destroyed 14 hooches in one compound and 12 more in another plus some clothes and rice. Soon after this, A Troop moved to Phan Rang to begin operations in the Dalat, Song Mao, Phan Rang area.

On the 13th, C Troop and the Golf Course at An Khe were rocketed. Mike Cochran recalls there are incidents that occurred 25-26 years ago that are still very fresh in my memory. One incident occurred on Friday the 13th. I was scheduled to fly front seat Cobra on this day and we were on the flight line pre-flighting the aircraft. The aircraft parking area was on the northern half of the Golf Course at An Khe. Some movement out of the corner of my eye caught my attention as we checked the aircraft. I turned my head to the left and faced south to see a cloud of smoke rising from an explosion near some buildings south of the Golf Course. Suddenly there was a flash of white that moved from right to left (west to east) and another explosion. It suddenly registered--in-coming and 122mm rockets at that! Several of us were at the aircraft and we sort of watched in awe for a moment as a couple more rockets hit in the same area. We weren't too concerned since the impacts were nearly a half mile away. Our keen interest suddenly turned to basic survival as the rockets began walking up the Golf Course toward the aircraft. We unassed the area immediately looking for the nearest hole as the rounds continued heading our way. There was a minor problem though. No holes were nearby so the shallow ditch beside the road had to do. We dove into the ditch and tried to become moles. The rockets kept coming closer with the nearest one hitting about forty yards from us. The explosions weren't as loud as I expected making more of a crump sound. Suddenly it was over. We stayed down a little longer and then got up and looked around. The aircraft were OK and no one was injured. A 122mm rocket made a nice hole in the ground. We continued with the preflights and the day's mission after we'd regained our composure. C Troop moved to Lane sometime between 13 and 19 November 1970. I'd heard about Lane and how great it was since arriving in the Troop in July and how badly everyone wanted to get back. The Cav claimed Lane as their own.

C Troop Moved from An Khe back to Lane

On the 19th, **SGT Thomas Ralph Bierline** died in Pleiku Province due to drowning. A source external to the 7/17th Cav indicates that he was serving with D Troop. To date the 7/17th Cav association has not been able to verify that he was serving with D Troop. SSG Bill Ryerson provides:

I was at Camp Holloway the first part of Nov. 1970 but wasn't with D Troop then. I was attached to 52nd Aviation in charge of the security police the first month I was there. I joined D Troop December 1st. Sorry I don't remember the name or hearing about a D Trooper drowning.

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record with fatalities for C Troop OH-6A #67-16335 flown by **CW2 John Robert Grisard** and **WO1 Stanley Dean Struble**. Both pilots died in this incident. The Blues were inserted. The burning wreckage extended the time it took for them to recover the bodies. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Grisard, 8 Jul 1970, unknown; Struble, 4 Jul 1970, 100B. CW2 Grisard had served a previous tour in Vietnam after completing helicopter school with class 67-3 but the VHPA does have details of his earlier tour.

WO Hubert M. "Mike" Cochran, who watched this sad event, wrote: The pilots in C Troop had spoken of the Soui Ca Valley since my arrival in July. Their stories led me to believe that this valley located to the WSW of LZ Uplift was bad news. November 19th would be the first time the unit had

worked the area since I arrived in country. We staged out of Uplift and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. The pink teams would go out and work the AO as usual. I was WO1 Tony Miller's front-seater, still waiting on an in-country transition. CW2 John Grisard was flying with WO1 Stanley Struble as part of his check out as a new Scout pilot. John was on his second tour. He had flown Cobras on his first tour, was a Cobra IP at Fort Stewart and was assigned to C Troop as a Cobra pilot. John was an excellent pilot and was extremely knowledgeable concerning the aircraft and tactics. John was also my roommate since I had arrived in country. However, there must have been a problem within the gun platoon for John to volunteer to fly Scouts. The Scouts detected lots of sign of fresh activity in the area once they began working the AO. They continued working the area still finding signs of bad guys when I detected a green tracer climbing toward our Cobra. I informed Tony and he in turn notified the Scouts. It was time to refuel so the Scouts were called and we returned to Uplift. After refueling, we found out that one of the Scouts had taken fire, but WO1 Malcolm R. Doremus had been unable to tell us because his UHF had been shot out. We returned to the AO after refueling and the Scouts began working the area again. Grisard and Struble were flying the lead Scout ship. Again they radioed that there were fresh signs of activity and Miller told the Scouts to climb to altitude so that the situation could be assessed. As the LOHs began their climb out Grisard and Struble were on our right side, and I watched them closely. Grisard radioed that they 'took a lot of fire as we flew over the blue line.' It was not clear whether he took the fire while he was still down low or on the climb out. That was his last transmission. Grisard and Struble's OH-6 was about 100 hundred yards to our right, slightly lower and almost even with our Cobra. Suddenly the nose of the LOH tucked about five to ten degrees and a small tongue of flame came out from under the aircraft. The next instant the aircraft burst into a ball of flame and began its plummet to the ground. I was dumbfounded as I watched. The aircraft was completely engulfed in flames. We were probably about 500-1,000 feet AGL, and it took a few seconds before it impacted. When the aircraft hit it looked as if the flames made a large splash. A lone rotor blade fluttered to the ground like a falling leaf as Tony Miller shouted over the radio to launch the Blues. Those of us who witnessed the crash knew that there was no chance of survivors due to the fire and the violent impact. The Blues were inserted probably less than five minutes later. There was some distance between the LZ and the crash site and it took some time for them to reach the wreckage. However, the Blues did their customary great job and got there as quickly as possible. The situation was developed further tactically and C Troop was credited with some KIAs. This was no consolation considering we had lost one LOH and two good friends.

WO1 Malcolm R. Doremus submitted the following comments to the VHPA in August 1996: CW2 John Grisard and WO1 Stan Struble were together in an OH-6A working a sweep through the Soui Cau Valley when they blew up in mid-air at tree top height. We believe this was either the result of an RPG or tracers to the fuel tank. CW2 Grisard was a "bored Cobra pilot" that wanted to fly Scouts. Struble was an experienced Scout pilot training "Griz." They had had mechanical trouble that morning and were very late getting to the AO. They then replaced me as wing LOH after my ship was shot up and I lost all communications and instrumentation. The Blues were inserted and the remainder of the day was spent recovering their bodies. It was several months before we went into the Soui Cau again.

11T David Stinson provides: CPT Ronnie Williams was a bit older than most of the field grade officers in C Troop – could be that Ronnie was NG and went active. He was a character. Ronnie was the gun platoon leader for a while. I was in Ronnie's front seat and watching with rapt attention, when Stan Struble and John Grisard literally blew up in a fireball while climbing off station on the east slope of the Soui Cau. It was a terrible day, and it had a really bizarre ending. We stayed out late, due to securing and recovering the bodies, and Ronnie and I were the last ship to reach Ba Gi and turn toward Lane. It was a pitch-black night and Snappy White, our maintenance officer and gambling buddy of both Ronnie and me, had put out some smudge pots to help the pilots

find home. I'll admit to being worn out and not paying attention as Ronnie flew the short distance from Ba Gi to Lane – couldn't see anything outside. I guess I finally got back into the game and started scanning the instruments, when I noticed the altimeter pegging down around zero. To make a very long story short, Ronnie had vertigo – we just missed a tree, bounced twice off rice dikes and spun a couple of times before finding some solid earth, at which time I jumped on the little collective with both hands to keep Ronnie from trying to take off again. I screamed at him – he screamed at me – then he said with great surprise in his voice, 'Stins – we're outside the wire.' He was so messed up he actually thought we'd landed at the airfield. I made him sit still for two or three minutes, and when he finally convinced me he was okay, he picked it up and we high hovered about four or five hundred meters, jumped the wire and landed on the pad. I fell out of the front seat and kissed the ground. Snappy White was standing nearby, laughing his rear off, and when we finally made connections, he said, 'Lootenant - some dinks were shooting at you from the side of the hill, but then I heard one of 'em yell to the other, "save your ammunition, Noogen, those guys are going to kill themselves."'

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #68-17188 flown by WO1 Malcolm R. Doremus with the rest of the crew un-named. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, at an altitude of 30 feet with 40 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the flight controls, structure, and communication console. They aborted the mission and flew to LZ Uplift. During the 2000 VHPA Reunion Mal Doremus, now deceased, added these details: The round cut the main electrical bundle to the radios and instruments. We couldn't tell anyone what had happened to us, so we flew back to LZ Uplift.

About the 19th, C Troop moved back to Lane after spending several months at An Khe. SGT Lee Parsons recalls: The closest I can get to the date C Troop moved is the third or fourth week of November 1970. I say this because I left Troop November 13, 1970 for my DEROS, spending a couple days at the replacement center in Cam Ranh Bay. I had packed up the Commo section into a single conex for the move except for the minimum necessary gear just before I left. I phoned back from the replacement center on the 15th and they were still at An Khe.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #66-15352 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14407 flown by an unnamed crew that suffered two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was recovered.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record with injuries record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16136 flown by any unnamed crew at grid ZA063273 (SW of Pleiku in the Ia Drang Valley, almost due west of Plei Me and about 2Ks from the Cambodian border). Both crew members sustained injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission while at an altitude of 100 feet with an airspeed of 60 knots over the target, they took more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed and burned, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The code 99 holes in this record usually means that the aircraft was near some type of explosion like a command detonated mine, a claymore, a mortar or artillery round.

SP4 Peter F. Riesenbergr recalls: I served with B Troop from Feb 1970 until Aug 1971. At this time I had been in scouts for only a few months after switching from the Blues because it was too boring.

I was in the lead LOH this day flying, I believe, with the Scout platoon leader, CPT Jon Mitchell. I do have a fairly good memory of the day. I believe it was in the afternoon. I remember the weather was overcast with a high ceiling, so we had no problem flying. We were working west of Pleiku near the Cambodian border in direct support of an ARVN unit in the area. The ARVN unit had located a bunker complex and was in the process of checking it. For some reason I recall that they had blown some bunkers with LAWs but I may be wrong on that one. It was a relatively routine mission and I do not recall any contact. Our wing ship definitely had two WOs in it as one was learning how to flying Scouts, but I just can't remember their names. We were flying along the edge of a field that had the normal tree stumps all over it. The stumps seemed to be 3 or 4 feet high. We were actually flying about 50 - 60 feet off the ground at a relatively low speed. Our wing man would have been a hundred meters or so behind our ship and to the right, so they were over the wooded area. There was a brief radio transmission by the wing that said simply, "We're going down!" Nothing else. CPT Mitchell flipped our bird around with the pedal thing that those pilots were good at and all I saw was the very end of the tail boom passing through the trees. As we headed toward the area a white phosphorous grenade exploded in the aircraft. I assumed that it was the marking grenade that the observer carried on the handle of the M-60 and it probably exploded on impact with the ground. This entire scene as I have just described took about 10 seconds. It was almost immediate. I told Captain Mitchell to put me in because they would burn to death. He set me down in the field and I took off for the treeline with only my chicken plate and my .38 in my hand. The Captain then took off and flew cover I assume. I have absolutely no memory of any sounds at all as I ran to find them. I never saw any gooks and I never saw any ARVN. I don't recall even seeing the LOH. My only memory is of running through the jungle and meeting up with the two. They were burned quite badly and I got them to the field and we waited in the treeline. They were on their feet and if my memory is right, and it may not be, I think most of their Nomex was burned off. Someone was obviously watching for me because we only waited a short time before the C & C landed in the field and I helped them in. I believe the pilot was Major Carr. It may have been before his time though. I have no idea who the co-pilot was or the crew. I remember looking at the two warrants and not a word was said. They appeared to be in shock and I recall their faces and the burns even to this day. But we did not speak. I remember the smell also. I don't recall a lot of the actual details because I think the adrenaline was running high. I don't even recall if we took them to the hospital or landed and put them on a DUSTOFF. I know that I went back to work. I didn't hear any ground fire prior to the crash, but we were out very close to the open field or actually over it. I do not recall ever hearing them call that they were receiving fire. I really don't know what caused them to go down but I've always thought that it could have been a tail rotor failure. I never saw them again. I have emailed CPT Mitchell and MAJ Carr and they did not remember their names either so I was hoping someone might know. I was never questioned about it and I simply called it a bad day for B Troop. I went home in December for Christmas and returned for my second hitch; the six-month extension. I found out in January that I was getting an award for that day. First I'd heard about it and I certainly didn't feel I deserved an award for doing what I thought was my duty, that's for sure.

On the 29th, **SP4 Ronald Raphael Greenhouse** was killed while serving as a member of HHT. As best we can determine he died as a passenger in C-7 crash en route from Pleiku to Cam Ranh Bay to DEROS. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 8 Jan 1970 and his MOS as 36K2P. Anyone who can provide details about his duties in HHT is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

SP5 Timothy Flood posted a B Troop scout platoon photo on the website. The photo shows 12 men in front of OH-6A 68-17345 (which according to the Goldbook database was assigned to A Troop in Nov 1970). Tim is at the top of the picture with a raised right fist. At least seven of the other gentlemen are giving the camera man 'the bird.' Names of others in the platoon (and maybe in the picture) are Dennis Kunkel, SP4 Peter F. Riesenber, Rickey Mills, James McConnell, Favor, Wallas, and SP5 Bob Moses.

The following enlisted men were reported on the 30 Nov 1970 C Troop Morning Report provided by Terry Kahl. The data presented is name (last name first name and middle initial); rank; primary MOS; and duty MOS (if different from the primary); comments

Allen Michael; SP4; 67N20
Anclien Charles M; PFC; 67N20; 67A10
Ardinger Lewis G; 1SG; comments 10 Aug 1970
Atkinson George E; SP4; 76Y40
Baker Johnnie R; SSG; 11B40
Baker William; PFC; 11B10
Baldwin Wallace B; SP6; 67I20; 67N20
Barrick Roger D; SP4; 67Y20
Beard James A; PFC; 67N20
Beloher Lonnie F; PFC; 67A1F
Belt Rodney D; PFC; 11B10
Berryman Timothy L; SP4; 67N20

December 1970

Sometime during this month, MAJ Sydna 'Bert' Allen assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Lou Hennies.

On the 4th, A Troop found numerous bunkers and secure fighting positions near Song Mao. The Guns fired up the area and killed two.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16536 flown by WO1 John Darrall Bryant and an un-named crew member who was injured at grid AN722249. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 90 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right side of cockpit and tail section. They crashed, the LOH burned and was completely destroyed. The injured crew member was rescued. According to the A Troop AUH, they worked an area just south of Song Mao when a Scout ship crashed into 150 foot trees. **WO1 John Darrall Bryant** was pinned under the aircraft and died. The copilot, though injured, was seen out walking around. One man was inserted to help the downed crew. They estimated the LOH was doing about 90 knots when it crashed. A small ARVN force was inserted to check the area. They reported the LOH had been hit by small arms fire and was a total loss. The body, radios, weapons, etc. were extracted during a heavy rain storm. The Wall database gives Bryant's tour start date as 20 Jul 1970 and his MOS as 100B.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss to theater record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16525 flown by an unnamed crew that had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 25 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took ten hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in lower left part of the cockpit, the cargo section, the left side of the engine compartment, and the main rotor blade system. They made a forced landing and the crew was evacuated. The helicopter was further damaged during recover and turned in to the 604th TC CO. It was evacuated to CONUS for repairs.

On the 11th still near Song Mao, A Troop's Scouts receive small arms fire and uncovered several fox holes, trails, fighting positions and clothing. The C&C received fire as well and the Guns shot up the area. From all existing evidence a platoon size VC had been used this area but no confirmed enemy bodies were found.

Also on the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14407 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right cockpit, right engine comp, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was evacuated and repaired in theater.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14407 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from SA/AW which hit the transmission, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was evacuated and repaired in theater.

SP5 Tim Flood recalls: The above mentioned battle damage record may well be the first day of 1LT Steven Moody and my shoot down two days in a row incident in the same location that appears in the "Just Luck – Not All Bad" in the Wednesday January 20 issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes. I remember we were south of the Mang Yang with a mission to look for donut shaped AA positions. We were making fast sweeps over the area looking for these positions. We were looking at trails and rice paddy areas. I remember we moved up a ridge to an area with a large paddy on the top of this plateau area. I'd guess we were doing at least 40 knots as Steve flew us right down the center of the paddy. I remember hearing the 51 firing and feeling the ship that a solid hit. I could feel grease on my neck and back. I turned and could see that the round had blown off part of the transmission. I could clearly see the parts turning in it. I told Moody about this. He wanted to go further to get away from the bad guys. I said we need to land before the rotor stops turning. It was a controlled force landing in thigh deep water. I took my M60 plus some ammo as I exited the LOH. There was no shooting. Our wing ship was right there to pick us up. The next day we returned and slung the LOH out. However, later in the day as mentioned in the Stars & Stripes article, we were shot down again and landed back in the same paddy.

On the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15047, location An Son, Binh Dinh Province, II Corps flown by WO1 William E. Best as pilot and Instructor Pilot CW2 D.M. Redd [His first name is Dennis but he goes by his middle name, Mike]. An extract from the official accident report reads as follows:

The Instructor Pilot was conducting an in-country initial standardization ride to the pilot. They had been in the area for one hour and forty minutes. They had completed four fixed right pedal landings to the ground along with four fixed left pedal landings and two neutral pedal landings to the ground. Two successful autorotations had been completed without proceeding as required. After the pilot had initiated his flare to decelerate, the aircraft was in a nose high attitude. At approximately 6-8 feet above the ground the pilot applied slight forward cyclic. After a moderately rough landing, collective was applied and the aircraft initiated a ground run of approximately 38' with an estimated airspeed of 20-25 knots. Reaching a gradual down slope of approximately 5 degrees, the front skids dug slightly into the soft sand base giving the pilot the feeling that the aircraft was going to do end over end. At this time the rotor speed being approximately 200 RPM the pilot applied abrupt aft cyclic and the aircraft came to a halt. The Instructor Pilot applied corrective action to compensate for the pilot's sudden application of aft cycle. Having felt nothing unusual about the condition of the aircraft, the Instructor Pilot debriefed the pilot as to what cause the excessive ground run. As the debriefing was finished (approximately two minutes) the 42 degree gearbox chip indicator came on, flickered for approximately three second and went off. The Instructor Pilot rolled on full throttle and attempted to pick the aircraft up to a hover. As he did so the aircraft's nose veered to the right. Applying more left pedal failed to correct the situation. Rolling the throttle off, the pilot exited the aircraft, observed the damage, and informed the Instructor Pilot. The aircraft was then shut down; Lane Army Heliport tower was informed via radio; and recovery operations were initiated.

CW2 Mike Redd, after reviewing a copy of this accident report, replied by email: "I'm glad to say that, in an aviation career that spanned 18 years, four countries, fixed and rotary wing ATPs, five type ratings including Lear and Citation jets and over 8,000 flight hours (2000+ as an instructor), the report outlined above is the only aircraft I ever bent. I joined C Troop in early Feb 1970 straight from Cobra school. I served as a Cobra IP for several months and DEROSed in Feb 1971 when C Troop was up north as part of Lam Son 719. The remember flying with CPT Fred Sullivan. He was the platoon leader I'm rather certain. In the following picture Fred is on the left. The kid holding my hand is "Yai" and the one next to him with the hat is "Dong." All of those kids were from an orphanage in the nearby village whose parents had been killed by VC or NVA. They often would help us hump ammo boxes or rockets during fast reload situations. I can recall several times when we rearmed two or even three times but only refueled once. Fred was a world-ranked light-heavyweight boxer before coming into the Army. After Vietnam I reconnected with him in Savannah when I assigned there to Cobra Hall as an SIP.



CPT Fred Sullivan and CW2 Mike Redd at LZ Uplift.

On the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15806 at grid BN783775 near Phan Rang flown by WO1 O.H. Davidsmeyer as pilot and 1LT R.D. Fluharty as CP. Both pilots received injuries in this incident. An extract from the official accident report reads as follows:

This aircraft was flown during its regular mission in the area of operations. Upon return from the AO, WO1 Davidsmeyer landed at POL for refueling before returning to the A Troop area located on the western side of Phan Rang Air Base. After refueling and the pre-takeoff check was found operative, WO1 Davidsmeyer departed POL, flying a wide right arc pattern to allow him proper clearance to clear Phan Rang extended at 200' AGL and 2 miles or beyond. Flying at an altitude of 100' AGL and 100 knots indicated airspeed, on a heading of 258 degrees, WO1 Davidsmeyer heard an explosion aft of the pilot's compartment and noticed the engine and rotor RPM decreasing rapidly. He lowered his collective and began a flare to try and build the rotor RMP as well as dissipate his air and ground speed. Just as the rotor RPM began to build and he got off a short radio transmission to the lead aircraft, first impact was made. At the time of the mishap the aircraft was on a heading of 258 degrees, with the wind direction from 050 degrees at 15 knots gusting to 18 knots, giving him a right quartering tail wind. As the aircraft made impact, WO1 Davidsmeyer increased collective to a maximum to cushion the landing, but even on impact the aircraft was traveling at 65-75 knots indicated airspeed. The aircraft made impact in a wooded area with such forward speed that it traveled 300 feet, tearing down trees and brush before hitting a rice paddy dike, causing the aircraft to flip and land inverted. After coming to a complete stop inverted, WO1

Davidsmeyer shut down the engine, broke out of the pilot's compartment using the canopy breakout knife, and then freed 1LT Fluharty who was trapped in the front of the aircraft. Both WO1 Davidsmeyer and 1LT Fluharty moved to the center of the rice paddy until the Air Force Rescue helicopter arrived and evacuated them to the dispensary for treatment. Numerous parts were broken from the aircraft from initial impact unit coming to rest inverted as listed in the description above.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #69-15977 flown by WO1 C.M. Rees and SSG Mills. An extract from the official accident report reads as follows:

At 0630 hours, WO1 Rees and SSG Mills took off on a visual reconnaissance mission of the local area, which lasted 45 minutes. At 0800 hours, WO1 Rees and SSG Mills took off for the forward staging area used for the area of operations that day. B Troop was released from its mission that day at 1030 hours, and at 1045 hours two boxes of armament were loaded on aircraft 69-15977 before WO1 Rees and SSG Mills took off to return to Camp Holloway. Upon return to Camp Holloway at 1100 hours, the aircraft was refueled, then repositioned to the B-1 taxiway for parking. The aircraft was number four in a flight of four OH-6A aircraft at this time. While hovering down the taxiway toward the parking revetment, WO1 Rees had to move slightly to the left of the taxiway centerline to remain clear of another OH-6A aircraft running up on the right side of the runway. As WO1 Rees turned slightly to the left to accomplish the maneuver, the aircraft began settling, and the aircraft struck the PSP taxiway. The aircraft was heading into the wind and there was no reported turbulence at the time of the accident. As the aircraft struck the PSP, the abrasion pads on the forward portion of both skids caught on the edge seam of the PSP. The aircraft began nosing over in a stationary position, and aft cyclic was applied to stop the aircraft. The left skid broke loose at the forward strut, remaining suspended from the aircraft by the rear strut. WO1 Rees regained control of the aircraft as it was flown forward and upward from its own inertia when the skids separated. Individuals present in the revetment area were notified to build a mound of sandbags to set the aircraft down on, and when these were in place the aircraft was set down without further damage or incident.

WO Carl Rees provided the following: It was me and it happened when we returned to the Christmas Tree. I had forgotten who was my observer that day, but we brought in a bunch of ammo and gear and after I refueled, I was taxiing to the revetment to park it and I was hovering down wind. I had a momentary loss of power and the LOH settled onto the PSP. By this time I had a whole armpit full of collective pitch, and when the power came back, the LOH jerked up and it pulled off one skid completely and the other skid was hanging down 90 degrees. I had to hover there like an idiot while they built a mound of sandbags and then I landed on it while they balanced the LOH because it was like a big egg sitting on a convex sandbag nest. I do remember they grounded me while they investigated it and they finally said it was my fault because I wasn't wearing Army issue sun glasses. I was wearing my gradient density civilian pilots glasses. I remember telling them that was the most stupid thing I ever heard - even for the Army. They even threatened to make me pay for the damage to the LOH. I told them where they could all stick the whole thing. What were they going to do - send me to Vietnam? I swear this is the truth. I forget who the CO was then, but I remember him standing there looking at me with a "you got to be sh#\$\$#ng me" look on his face while I hovered there for what seemed like a VERY LONG time while they made that little "LOH nest."

After reviewing the above comments from WO Rees during the 2008 Reunion, MAJ Glenn Carr provided: I was the CO Carl Rees couldn't remember! I also dispute his comment about the "you got to be sh#\$\$#ng me" look on my face. I was helping build the sandbag cradle. I was just thankful that we could save the aircraft with just minimal damage. I also don't have any knowledge of that ridiculous ruling from an accident investigation board. While it was a standard procedure to ground a pilot for a few days after any accident and to have him take a check-ride, I don't remember him

being grounded for any long period of time and, trust me, I would NEVER have recommended that the Army make him pay for the LOH repairs. It was an accident pure and simple.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #68-17264 flown by WO1 Avon Norris Mallette and SP4 George Arthur Knetsar at grid BP389497. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission. At an altitude of 20 feet with 70 knots of airspeed, a rocket propelled grenade type exploding weapon hit the tail section. The helicopter crashed and was destroyed. Both crew members died in this incident. The A Troop AUH state that during a VR, an A Troop LOH took a direct hit from a B40 rocket. The subsequent explosion killed **WO Avon Norris Mallette** and his observer, **SP4 George Arthur Knetsar**. All equipment was secured by an ARVN ground unit. The enemy was engaged on the ground and by the Guns. The bodies were extracted by the C&C and by the end of the day the ARVN unit was also extracted under extremely hazardous conditions. SP4 Knetsar had served with the Blues before becoming a Scout. SGT Tony Morton remembers that George often mentioned that he wanted to fly and be a Scout while they served together in the Blues. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Knetsar, 11 Apr 1969, 11D40; Mallette, 14 Jul 1970, 100B.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16083 flown by an unnamed crew that had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 150 feet with 50 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bubble and the M60, they continued flying, completed the mission, and the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12940 flown by CPT A.J. Hite as pilot and SP4 D. Oliveto as Observer near Phan Rang. An extract from the official accident report reads as follows:

At approximately 1400 hours CPT Hite took off as the lead pilot of a team of OH-6A aircraft in an Air Cavalry team on a VR mission. The team worked for about an hour in turbulent air when SP4 Oliveto noticed that the M-16 rifle normally carried suspended between the logbook holder and the left door in the bubble had fallen parallel to the floor. Attempting to retrieve the rifle proved futile so CPT Hite notified the rest of the helicopters in the team that he was going to land so SP4 Oliveto could extract the rifle and replace it where it was readily available. CPT Hite then selected an open area and made a quick aerial reconnaissance and started an approach to this area. When he lost translational lift and started to pull in power to hover, CPT Hite discovered that the rifle had moved around and was now blocking his pedals. As the helicopter started to turn rapidly to the right CPT Hite added forward cyclic to gain airspeed so the helicopter would streamline and he could fly it to an area suitable for a running landing. The helicopter continued to turn to the right so CPT Hite maneuvered it into the middle of the open area and reduced the throttle to flight idle and initiated a hovering autorotation. The helicopter stopped spinning to the right and settled smoothly until the right rear skid contacted a two foot dike that was hidden by tall grass. It then started to pitch to the left and continued rapidly down. When the left skid contacted the ground it collapsed and the helicopter rolled on its left side destroying the main rotor system. CPT Hite cut off the fuel and electrical power and the crew exited the aircraft.

While preparing this history, many people were asked the question - when were the GI Blues taken away from the ACTs? MAJ Glenn Carr, Embalmer 6, provided the following insights:

The Blues left during my watch. When I took command of B Troop on or about 21 Sep 1970, we had American Blues and probably kept them for another three months during which time we trained ARVN scouts as Blues, some called them "Browns." I don't know how politically correct that would be now but who cares, it's a fact. I definitely recall inserting GI Blues on real combat necessities but that became very risky since American reaction forces were non-existent. I can remember the

Executive Order became effective in December 1970 or 1 January 1971. I would guess 1 Jan since that is a popular time to start stuff like this. The EO stated: "No more US forces would be committed to ground combat" - or words to that effect. We generally had ARVN Scouts available and they did a reasonably good job when inserted. The problem was you could never find your Reaction Force either on the net or on the ground when you really needed them. So I made a rule that we would not insert unless it was to secure a downed aircraft. I didn't get any flack over that so we stayed in the air afterwards. Besides, the war was winding down so much there was virtually no need to insert.

WO Bennie See recalls: I joined B Troop right out of flight school in May 1969 and served with the Pallbearers until May 1970. When I made AC I was Pallbearer 32.

Year End Summary - 1970 could be summed up in one word, Vietnamization. The ACTs were increasingly involved in helping the ARVN learn about Air Cavalry and in supporting ARVN operations. The battles around Dak To, Ben Het, and Dak Seang plus the Cambodian operations were clear examples of Vietnamization.